This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

1840.
195.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

CHURCH OF GOD;

A BOOK FOR THE AGE.

Digitized by Google

LONDON :—J. LENNETT, 121, FLEET STREET.

Digitized by Google

THE

CHURCH OF GOD;

A Book for the Age.

BY

THE REV. J. D. HULL, A.B.

CURATE OF BANGOR, DIOCESE OF DOWN.

"Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."
Rev. xxi. 9.

"The church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood." Acts x. 28.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET AND CO. BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCXL.

195.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

THE age in which we live might not improperly be denominated "Peleg," for the earth is indeed divided.* We are fallen upon days of rebuke and blasphemy—days of unprecedented warfare and dissention. A war of principles—a conflict of opinion—marshals one half of the world against the other. This was to have been expected. As there must be heresies, that, as the apostle says, they which are approved may be made manifest;† so, to oppose, overcome, and drive them from the field, there must also be controversies. And it is matter for unspeakable satisfaction and gratitude, that the God of truth has ever, from time to time, as the exigence demanded, raised up his faithful and able witnesses, who have contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. By such instrumentality

* Gen. x. 25. † 1 Cor. xi. 19.

Digitized by Google

Christianity triumphed over Paganism; and to the same, under God, we are indebted for the blessed and glorious Reformation, and for the maintenance of its principles in the world at the present day. *Esto perpetua!*

But almost every thing sublunary has its drawbacks and inconveniences. While the citadel of orthodoxy is vigorously invested, and as vigorously defended, the garrison is in danger of being starved. Controversy, though absolutely necessary, is, after all, perhaps a necessary evil. At all events, it is by no means desirable for its own sake. It is rather the medicine than the nutriment of the soul, and is often most keenly relished by those, whose spiritual appetite is the least healthy; who savour not the things that be of GOD; who are very far from righteousness, and from desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.

While the respective combatants are strenuously engaged, and the Church is intensely interested in the contest, the weightier matter is apt to be comparatively lost sight of—namely, "godly edifying which is in faith." Piety remains in a state of abeyance. The

Digitized by Google

vessel, beating against a strong head wind, makes little if any progress; nay, very probably is driven backward. This is Satan's aim;—his *ruse de guerre*,—his stratagem and, too oft, his triumph. It has been said, not without apparent reason, that God made theology: the devil controversy.

Under such circumstances any attempts to recall attention to those more vital and essential verities, which are emphatically *the Gospel*, and which constitute the Church's proper aliment, may not, surely should not, be unwelcome. Whatever objection may be advanced against the multiplication of books, new books will be had: and when heresy and error are industriously propagated, equal zeal at the least is imperatively called for in administering a corrective; that so, that mighty engine for good or for evil, the Press, may not diffuse a savour of death only, but, like things that carry in them an antidote to their own poison, circulate also a savour of life and of health.

Such is the design of the present publication. The mode of a sinner's justification with God being an article of primary and fundamental importance; one, consequently, which the

Digitized by Google

great Adversary is now, as he has ever been, endeavouring to darken, is determined in the outset. The remaining pages embody such doctrines as, under Divine influence, are pre-eminently calculated to invigorate and sustain the Church under that fiery ordeal, through which, apparently, she is soon to pass. The concluding piece was published some years since, as a pastoral address; and is now, with some few amendments and additions, reprinted, as appearing seasonable, as harmonizing with those preceding it, and as forming a not unappropriate termination of the volume.

This humble attempt, then, to illustrate her privileges, character, and prospects, is presented to THE CHURCH OF GOD,* and especially to the congregations to whom the author has had the happiness to minister, with unfeigned diffidence. He disclaims all pretensions to superior learning, or originality:—originality, it has been truly observed, is the last thing we should look for in advice.* He frankly avows considerable obligations, in the two opening discourses, to the profound wri-

* The expression is taken in its spiritual sense, as signifying God's converted people.

Digitized by Google

tings of the Rev. Thomas Goodwin, B. D., whose treatise, entitled "Christ set forth" he considers particularly valuable.* But while he of course availed himself of human helps, Scripture has been his grand and special succedaneum. And as truth is best exhibited in her own divine and matchless language, he has aimed to speak as the oracles of God, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

He is sensible, (to use the phraseology of the great and eloquent Mr. Burke,) he has not disposed his materials to abide the test of a captious controversy, but of a sober and even forgiving examination; that they are not armed at all points for battle, but dressed to visit those who are willing to give a peaceful entrance to truth.

Should his little work contribute to render the Book of books more plain or more pleasant to any; should it prove instrumental of removing doubt, prejudice, or error from a single mind:—of converting one ungodly, of establishing one wavering, of reclaiming one wandering, of comforting one weary soul,—above

* A very neat and cheap edition of it has been published by the London Tract Society.

Digitized by Google

all, should it serve in the smallest degree to produce a more just appreciation of the adorable King and SAVIOUR of the Church; a more entire devotedness to Him; a more courageous confidence in Him; and a more earnest and prayerful desire for his appearing,—then the writer will not regret the hours he has spent in its preparation.

Christian Reader: ask for a blessing on this feeble endeavour to glorify GOD, and edify his Church, of Him, who chooseth the weak things of the world to confound those which are mighty; that so, the bread now cast upon the waters may be found, even though it should be after many days.

August, 1840.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

THE CHURCH OF GOD.

No.		Page
I.	Her perfect Justification	1
II.	Her infallible Salvation	22
III.	Her heavenly Bridegroom	41
IV.	The Espousals	64
V.	The Nuptials	84
VI.	Her Trials	105
VII.	Her peculiar Deportment	129
VIII.	Her Resources	153
IX.	Her Bridegroom's sudden coming	176
X.	Her Safeguard	201
XI.	Hymns	249

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE CHURCH OF GOD.

No. I.

HER PERFECT JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS VIII. 33, 34.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God."

WALK about Zion; tell the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks, and observe how strong is that line of fortifications wherewith a wise and gracious GOD hath surrounded his people. Well may they sing, "We have a strong city; salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks." The everlasting covenant, contemplating their eternal well-being, is so well and surely ordered, that not one of them can be lost. Their conversion, sanctification, and eventual arrival in glory were all pre-arranged, ages before they were born; and, therefore, what God had determined, altogether irrespectively of

Digitized by Google

them, and simply because such was his sovereign pleasure, can never by any subsequent contingencies be frustrated or defeated.

There is a golden chain of mercy let down from heaven into the hearts of those whom "God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation,"* and they, laying hold of it by faith, which God inclines and enables them to do, are ultimately drawn up by it into glory. This is most clearly declared in the sublime verses almost immediately preceding my text:—"All things work together for good to them that love God: to them who are the called according to his purpose: for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." (Were it properly observed how uniformly, in Scripture, predestination, as a *cause*, is connected with sanctification as a *consequence*,† it would surely serve considerably to remove the prejudice that prevails against the doctrine, on the ground of its supposed antinomian tendency.) "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called;" (that is, converted; called effectually;) "and whom

* "These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down to earth into the hearts of his children; and they laying hold on it, have sure hold of the other two, for no power can sever them."—Archbishop LEIGHTON. See Commentary on 1 Peter i. 2.

† See, for example, 1 Pet. i. 2. Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

Digitized by Google

He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

In the verses proposed for examination, the actual accomplishment of this fore-ordained salvation is devolved upon the Mediator; for what the Father pre-determined, according to that eternal covenant of peace on man's behalf, which was between them both, the Son undertook to carry into execution. Two grand obstacles to the salvation of the elect are contemplated, but their triumph over them both is, notwithstanding, fully guaranteed. These obstacles are—the guilt of believers themselves; and the opposition they encounter from their enemies. "Within are the alarms of conscience fearing the wrath of God: without are adversity and tribulations. Unless they overcome the former of these, they cannot prevail against the latter." The Church's victory over both these impediments is intended to be exhibited in the ensuing discourses. May God the Spirit render them profitable to our souls.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Here is a challenge given, in the name of Jehovah's people, to the whole universe. The inspired writer, in a rapture of exulting joy, in the elevating confidence of a clear faith, throws down the gauntlet, and defies their bitterest foes either to criminate or harm them. And why? God himself is *for* them, and justifies them. Justification is GOD'S work. It is against Him that we all have

Digitized by Google

sinned, and, consequently, to Him alone it appertaineth to forgive. When *faith* is said to justify, it is only as a means or instrument. "I, even I," says God, "am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake."*

But Satan and conscience will enter their protests. They will say, Believers, as well as others, have violated the divine law, and, therefore, by God's own declaration, they must experience his vengeance. If God let the sinner go, then He is not true; He has broken his word.

Now this argument the Apostle takes up. On this objection all his reasoning proceeds; and, by an accumulation of facts, any one of which seems of itself sufficient, demonstrates, in the most triumphant manner, the safety, present and eternal, of the individuals in question. Let us, then, suppose "the accuser of the brethren," thus arraigning the child of GOD, and requiring his condemnation and death on account of his sins; and see how abundantly every charge is rebutted, and every fear of the believer silenced, by the considerations that are adduced.

1. Of these the first is—that "CHRIST HATH DIED." This is advanced against all unrighteousness on the part of the believer. "By this the Apostle intimates the impossibility of our being absolved from sin, without a satisfaction being made for the injury

* Isa. xliii. 25.

Digitized by Google

done to the rights of God's justice, and the sacred majesty of his eternal laws, which had been violated. He shews that it is impossible that we could be justified without satisfaction being made to the justice of God. For God could not set aside his justice by his mercy, and justify sinners without an atonement. It was on this account God instituted the sacrifices under the law, to hold forth the necessity of a satisfaction, and that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin."

A ruler must, not merely for his own interest, but also for that of his subjects, support the dignity of the law; for the law is the guardian of their respective rights, and without it there is no security for property or person. Take away this barrier, and a flood-gate is instantly opened to a deluge of anarchy and violence. But if this be so in human kingdoms, how incomparably more requisite must it be for the Ruler of the universe to uphold *his* law—to "magnify and make it honourable." Most willing He may be to shew mercy to the transgressor; but He must at the same time affix the mark of his righteous condemnation on the transgression. Now God hath really done this in a manner that most impressively displays both his love to man, and his abhorrence of sin. He has abated nothing whatever of his just rights: He has not compromised in the slightest degree his high and holy character of a Being who is "of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity." He hath exacted to his violated law the

Digitized by Google

most rigid reparation; but all the while He hath, in the way of satisfaction, exacted nothing from *us*. He hath rendered the requisite satisfaction himself. In the person of JESUS He has "condemned sin in the flesh." On Him He hath made to meet the iniquity of us all, and in Him hath visited it and removed it. "Who, then, is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died." "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

But how may the anxious, sin-convinced soul be assured of the *competency* of Christ's death to atone for its guilt and render it righteous with GOD? The question, however natural, is needless. What! Will not the just God abide by his own stipulated terms? Will He not accept the very atonement which He himself hath appointed and provided? Will He nullify his own covenant, and break his own engagement? Will He violate his promise to his own dear Son, whom He spared not when He cried unto Him in the extremity of his agonies?—the promise, namely, that, when He should make his soul an offering for sin, He should see his seed, He should prolong his days,"* and "bring many sons to glory?"† Impossible. The very supposition borders on blasphemy. The death of Christ has satisfied for thousands of souls now in heaven, and therefore, any doubt as to its infinite merit is utterly groundless. We are told in God's word, that "the blood

* Isaiah liii. † Heb. ii. 10.

Digitized by Google

of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin;" that "by his one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified:" that his death is not only an equivalent for our transgressions, but immeasurably more,—that "where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound." We read that, "if by one man's offence death reigned by one, (that is, Adam,) *much more*, they which receive *abundance* of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."* The Apostle speaks of the grace of God being exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."† In a word, he declares that the riches of Christ (riches of mercy of course included,) are "unsearchable."‡ That Christ hath died, then, ought certainly to afford the most perfect satisfaction to every soul, anxious about the pardon of its sins, and that flees for refuge to the Saviour. God is infinitely too just to punish those iniquities in *us*, which He hath already punished in our *Substitute*. He cannot exact two payments for one and the same debt.

2. But the text goes further. The Apostle adds a "yea rather." This brings us to a higher step on the spiritual pyramid. It places us on a yet prouder elevation, whence we may take a still more extended view of the glorious plan of our salvation, and of

* Rom. v. 17. † 1 Tim. i. 14. ‡ Eph. iii. 8.

Digitized by Google

the believer's safety in accordance with it. Christ hath not only died, but is moreover "RISEN AGAIN." Had He not been raised, possibly we might have had cause for questioning the sufficiency of his sacrifice. We might have been tempted to doubt whether He had not undertaken more than He was able to accomplish. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain," says the Apostle to the Corinthians; "ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." "But, (he adds,) now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." He assumes it as a fact respecting which no question could be raised, and which, indeed, was established by testimony the most abundant and incontestible, namely, that of hundreds who were eye-witnesses of Him risen, and who sealed their testimony with their blood.

And what an unquestionable proof was his resurrection of the adequateness of his atonement, and of the Father's perfect satisfaction with it, as Lawgiver. It was virtually setting the broad seal of his Divine approbation on the Saviour's person and performance. It was, indeed, acknowledging Him to be "his beloved Son in whom He was well-pleased." It was accrediting all that the Redeemer had said and done. It was justifying Him from every charge and from every suspicion—and, what principally concerns *our* comfort,—justifying *us* also, if we

Digitized by Google

rightly believe in Christ: as it is written, "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."*

His resurrection is the proof of his victory, and of the entire expiation of his people's sins. It is, therefore, opposed to their condemnation, as being their absolution and acquittal; for, as the death of Jesus Christ was *his* condemnation and that of all united to Him, so his resurrection is his absolution and theirs also. As the Father, by delivering Him to death, condemned their sins in Him, in raising Him from the dead, He pronounced their acquittal from all the sins that had been laid upon Him.

To render this subject, upon a clear and lucid apprehension of which our peace and well-being so materially depend, still more perspicuous, let us just recollect how the case stood. Christ was our SURETY. So He is styled in the epistle to the Hebrews: "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."† Now, what is a surety? He is one who stands in another's stead: who represents another, who is responsible for another: who, to use a familiar phrase, *goes bail* for another. Christ was our sponsor, bail, or surety. He became accountable for us. Only for his immediate interposition, man must have perished, under the infliction of eternal wrath, as soon as he offended. That

* Rom. iv. 25. † Heb. vii. 22.

Digitized by Google

Rock of ages upheld a guilty world from sinking into instantaneous and everlasting destruction. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: and his blood, in due time to be shed for the guilty, extinguished, so to speak, the kindling flames of that indignation which to sin "is a consuming fire."

Now then, Divine Justice, as the creditor in this transaction, instead of arresting *us*, arrested our Surety. That the sheep might escape, the avenging sword awaked against the unoffending Shepherd. It pierced Him to the soul on Calvary, and He was subsequently consigned to the prison of the grave. *There* had He been left, we all had perished with Him. Our fate was involved in his. We were identified with Him, for better or for worse. Had that Ark gone down, we all had sunk to the depths of perdition. But God would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his holy One to see corruption. He would neither permit the Saviour's *mind* to remain in that most inconceivable misery, which on our account He experienced in Gethsemane and on the cross, and which was to Him as hell itself; nor afterwards allow his *mortal* part to undergo decomposition and corruption: and when our illustrious Surety was released from his durance on the third morning, and that with such stupendous honours — what was it but notifying to the intelligent universe, that justice had been fully satisfied; that it demanded nothing more: that the Redeemer had

Digitized by Google

done all—if not more than all—to procure our justification, that was necessary to be done: and that our debt had been paid to the uttermost farthing?

That a Being so innocent, yea, so positively righteous as Jesus, should suffer at all, much more, so dreadfully as *He* did, plainly demonstrated that it was "not for himself," but for others, that He so suffered. As, then, his dying evinced that He was discharging the penalty incurred by *our* sins, his rising again declared that He had fully cancelled all the demands of the divine law, and had brought in an everlasting righteousness for our justification.

Again, as his condemnation was a formal judicial act, on the part of the supreme Lawgiver, in compliance with the principles on which He governs, so likewise was his discharge. Justice to Christ, as well as to us, demanded the one, as well as the other. His liberation must be as formal and as notable as his apprehension. This would, in fact, be tantamount to a legal receipt and acknowledgment that our debt had been paid.

When then did this formal release and discharge take place? Scripture determines the time to the Saviour's *resurrection*. It says, in one text, that He was "*justified* in the spirit." It says in another, that He was "*quickened* by the Spirit." Clearly, then, his justification occurred at his quickening or restoration to life; in the same manner as *we* are justified, when we are born again, or raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. In re-

Digitized by Google

ference to that period it seems to be, that the Father uses these words—"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Christ is "the first begotten from the dead;" and was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection;* intimating, that his real grandeur, dignity, and Godhead, had previously been comparatively eclipsed.

Thus then was Christ justified by his resurrection, and consequently, in Him all believers are justified also. "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."†

Here, by the way, a comparison is instituted between Christ and Adam,—between the second man and the first: a comparison which further elucidates the present subject. Adam was a *public* person. He represented the species: he was mankind's epitome: the acorn whence sprang the human tree. We all were in him; are expressly said to have "died in him;" and accordingly, his transgression is imputed to all his posterity. Thus, even *infants*, who have never personally sinned, are nevertheless subjected to pain and death; proving, undeniably, the imputation to them of the guilt of their great progenitor.

Now, as Adam was a public person, so is CHRIST.

* Rom. i. 4. † Rom. v. 18.

Digitized by Google

The former was the federal representative of all mankind; the latter is the federal Representative of all his people. Adam is accordingly termed "the figure (or type) of Him that was to come."*

As, then, we all sinned, and died in Adam, so all who lay hold of Christ as their spiritual Head, being united to Him through faith, have virtually died in Him; in Him have satisfied divine justice; in Him, consequently, are justified and accepted. Thus they are described in Scripture as "dead with Christ;" "crucified with Christ;" "quickened together with Christ;" and "seated with Him in heavenly places."†

Nay, not only is the Saviour's resurrection an evidence that He has fully answered all demands against them, in the way of punishment; but also a pledge and earnest of their own glorious resurrection. Thus we read, that "as in Adam all die;" even so in "Christ shall all be made alive." Hence Christ is designated "the first fruits of them that slept;" sanctifying and ensuring the whole harvest.

"Who then shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again." By the death of Em-

* Rom. v. 14. τύπος.

† Gal. ii. 20. Eph. ii. 5, 6. Col. ii. 12. Heb. xii. 22, 23.

Digitized by Google

manuel for our sins, God is evidently satisfied; and what satisfies his justice should assuredly satisfy the conscience of every anxious penitent.

3. But the Redeemer has not only died and risen again,—He is, moreover, ASCENDED; ascended up, far above all heavens, as a King and a Conqueror; dragging through the aerial regions the hosts of hell, captives at his chariot wheels. O! what a glorious triumph! Presenting himself at the heavenly gates, He commands them to open to Him: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." The command is immediately obeyed. The pearly portals are thrown open. The victorious Saviour, having the keys of hell and of death suspended at his girdle, enters his native dominions amidst the shouts and acclamations of the admiring myriads. Arrived at his Father's throne, He is crowned with many crowns, constituted the Head over all things, and seated in the place of supreme authority and power. As it follows—"who is even at the right hand of God."

Thither, then, let us follow Him in thought. Thither let us raise our hearts and affections. Because He humbled himself below all other humiliation, even to the death of the cross; therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all

Digitized by Google

principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

The Father has fulfilled to his dear Son that prediction of the Psalmist, "The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The right hand is the place of honour. Thus, when King Solomon would pay his mother the most marked respect, he sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for her on his right hand. What a demonstration then is this, that Christ has been accepted of his Father,—that He has accomplished all on our behalf, that He undertook to accomplish; that He hath magnified the divine law, and satisfied the Divine Lawgiver,—"who is even AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."

Were a prince of the blood, for imputed rebellion against his king, condemned; were an act of attainder passed upon him, depriving him of his properties and titles, and sentencing him to death and decapitation; and were we afterwards informed that this very individual had been received at court, treated with distinguished attention, and placed at the sovereign's right hand at table, and invested with unbounded authority, could we question for a moment the fact of his reinstatement in the royal favour? No; we could not. Who, for example, could have questioned Joseph's restoration

Digitized by Google

to the favour of Pharaoh, when he was taken from his dungeon, and set over all the realm of Egypt? Seeing, then, Christ is thus exalted in the court of heaven, installed in the administration of affairs over all worlds, how vain were it to doubt for a single moment, that all the iniquity wherewith He was charged on our account has been remitted, and that He is "God's beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased?"

Now, let us always bear in mind the relation which the Saviour fills to those who truly trust in Him. He is their Representative *now*, as well as He was when on earth. He represented them on the cross. There and in the garden did He bear the full storm of the divine indignation. He was bruised for their iniquities: He was punished as their surety, or rather, they were punished in Him. By a just and necessary consequence, then, being united to Him by faith, they are now in Him accepted, exalted, and glorified.

There is another circumstance connected with this branch of our subject which further establishes the same conclusion, which is the *posture* ascribed to Christ in the heavenly kingdom: that of SITTING. The inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews draws a remarkable contrast between the Jewish high priest and our's, in this particular: "every priest," says he, "*standeth* daily ministering, and offering *often* the same sacrifices, which can never

Digitized by Google

take away sins. But this man, after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever *sat* down on the right hand of God."*

Standing implies something remaining to be done; but *sitting*, that the work has been completed, and that the person now rests from his labours: as God is said to have *rested* the seventh day from all his works. Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand denotes that He is invested with supreme power; that He has taken possession of heaven in his people's name; and that He is employing his unlimited influence and power to aid, defend, and bring them thither. Who then can question their most perfect acceptance with God? Who can accuse those who are thus already glorified and saved in their exalted Mediator?

There is another step still in this heavenly ladder; but *that* I must defer to a future consideration. For the present I conclude with a very few observations relative to what has been already advanced. Do I address any sin-convinced soul, oppressed with a sense of its guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath? Let such be encouraged by the foregoing meditations, to "look unto Jesus" and be saved. There is sufficient merit, sufficient power, and sufficient willingness also in Him, to cleanse and deliver you from all your iniquities: ay, though they had been ten thousand times more numerous or enormous than they are. Though you had been guilty of as

* Heb. x. 12.

Digitized by Google

many sins as ever were committed by the whole human species, magnify and multiply them as you please; yet the blood of the blessed Lamb of God, sprinkled on your hearts by the Spirit of faith, can wash them clean away, and present you as spotless before the Father, as the holiest angel that stands in his presence. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. "It is a sea which has neither bounds nor bottom and can cover the top of the highest mountain that is cast into it." We read of lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition, but here is an ocean that can drown those very lusts. The deity of the offerer confers on the sacrifice an unlimited value.

Yea, such is the wondrous wisdom and consideration of God, that He has graciously provided us in his dear Son some countervailing circumstance against every peculiarity and grade of transgression that might possibly oppress the conscience of any sincere penitent. For example: have our sins been many and heinous? Christ, our surety, was charged with many and heinous crimes. Were you even a traitor, an impostor, a seducer, a blasphemer, a devil himself, the Holy One of God was innocently accused of all these enormities.

Again, are your outward misdemeanors aggravated by inward depravity of heart? Christ's bodily sufferings were incomparably exceeded by his mental. The sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings.

Digitized by Google

Again; were your sins premeditated? Remember, Christ's death was also premeditated, ages before.

Once more: have you presumptuously made a covenant with hell? as some are asserted in Scripture to do: this is not probable; but supposing you had committed even *this* iniquity—what then? Christ offered himself for your sins by a covenant with heaven—or rather heaven's King.

In short, there is nothing you can adduce as a ground of discouragement; but there is something in the circumstances attending the Redeemer's satisfaction fully to counterbalance and outweigh it. With Him there is not only redemption, but "plenteous redemption." There is not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of grace. Wherefore "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." To *the uttermost*—that is, to the uttermost extent of guilt, to the uttermost stage of sanctification, and to the uttermost point of time. He "has the keys of hell and of death." Who then can plunge you into the abyss of torment, when the keys of that infernal prison are in possession of your Saviour?

The question, therefore, is not—how sinful you are; how aggravated your sinfulness by knowledge, by ingratitude, by warnings, by impenitence, or by any other causes; the question is—Do you now repent? Are you heartily sorry for these your misdoings? Is the remembrance of them grievous to you? Is the

Digitized by Google

burden of them intolerable? And do you now draw nigh to God by Christ, with prayer, and confession, and supplication? If so—then Christ is able and willing to save you, and saved you shall certainly be. "For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word: to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Be not dismayed then by fears that you are not of the "elect" mentioned in the text—Who shall prove elect, and who not, is one of those "secret things which belong unto God." Beware then of "meddling with matters too high for you," and which are God's exclusive prerogative. Beware of falling on that stone of offence, on which, it is to be feared, many have stumbled at the very threshold of religious enquiry: and thence been precipitated into desperation and perdition. Remember the unrestricted fulness and freeness of the gospel invitations. *All*, all without exception, are invited, nay besought, nay required, nay admonished, at the peril of eternal punishment, to go to God, and lay hold of that perfect and eternal salvation, which He so cordially offers them in the Redeemer. Nor will any perish because they were not elected, but simply because they "would not go to Christ that they might have life." Go then to Him; cast yourself at his feet: and say, "If I perish, I will perish here." But

Digitized by Google

there perdition is as impossible, as to famish with cold in the very fires of the sun. There you are at the very fount and well-spring of salvation. And Christ casts none away that go to Him; but counsels all the ends of the earth to "look unto Him, and be saved."

Digitized by Google

No. II.

HER INFALLIBLE SALVATION.

ROMANS VIII. 34.

"Who also maketh intercession for us."

We have contemplated our adorable Saviour as dying, risen, and ascended to the right hand of his Father. We have seen that by his death He made satisfaction to the divine law for our violations of it; that, by his rising again He demonstrated the perfect sufficiency of that satisfaction, and that by his ascension into heaven and instalment there in the seat of supreme dignity and power He gave a still more unquestionable evidence of his acceptance with the Father as the representative of his people, and consequently of their acceptance and salvation in Him. We thus arrive at the last and capital stone of that stupendous column on which the church of God is so gloriously elevated above the reach of her enemies, and underneath whose deep foundations her sins lie buried for ever in the grave of her Redeemer.

Digitized by Google

Though seated on his Father's throne, and swaying the sceptre of universal sovereignty, Jesus is not inactive respecting us. He has not forgotten us in his exaltation. He bears his people on his breast, watches over them with unslumbering vigilance, and exercises all his unrestricted powers to bring them safe to glory.

Now the way whereby He does this is by *interceding* for them. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him"—how? "seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

This portion of the Saviour's work has probably been too little considered by us. It is one, however, most essential and important. It was not sufficient that Aaron and his successors in the sacerdotal office should, on the great annual day of expiation, offer the appointed victims outside the most holy place; they must moreover bear the blood within the vail, and sprinkle it on and before the mercy-seat. And so our blessed High Priest, whom they prefigured, must not only "offer *himself* without spot to God," as the true sacrifice and propitiation for our sins; but also enter with his own blood into the real sanctuary, heaven itself, and virtually present it to the Father as our atonement. Nay more; as the High Priest of Israel was required, on the same occasion, to cover the mercy-seat with a cloud of incense from the censer which he held in his hand,* so

* Lev. xvi. 11—13.

Digitized by Google

must the Lord Jesus, in order to our salvation, follow up his atonement with the spiritual incense of his prayers and intercessions. As it was predicted of Him by Isaiah: "He bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Intercession is in fact equivalent to a continual atonement. It perpetuates the efficacy of the sacrifice offered once for all on Mount Calvary. It not only procures for his people the gift of the Holy Spirit, to sprinkle his blood upon their consciences, for their justification from all *past* offences, but further procures for them the forgiveness of every *future* offence, into which, by the violence of external temptation and inward corruption, they may unhappily be betrayed.

For, although on their first believing and repenting, they are fully justified from all previous offences, yet does every succeeding transgression and disobedience merit their condemnation and ruin notwithstanding; "for the wages of sin is death." Wherefore, it is absolutely requisite, that, on every such occurrence, the Saviour should in the heavenly temple heap on the golden censer the incense of his merits and prayers, to obtain their pardon anew. Then, as the Father viewed us in Him in Gethsemane and on the cross, and there visited us in Him; so now, if we believe, He views us in Him in heaven, and thus, "sees no iniquity" in us, for which He will eternally condemn us. Christ is that "rainbow round about the throne," at the sight whereof

Digitized by Google

the Father remembers his everlasting "covenant with his chosen,"* respecting all that should lay hold on it;—namely, that "their sins and iniquities He would remember no more."† And accordingly we read, that, "if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his *life*." In short, as by his death He *purchased* our salvation; by his intercession He causes it to be *applied* and made effectual to us individually, by the Holy Spirit.

Now as this is a subject of very primary importance, it may be well to improve the present opportunity of investigating it a little; and in so doing we shall accordingly consider,

I. The objects of the Saviour's intercession:

II. The subjects of it:

III. Its prevalency or success.

I. With respect to THE OBJECTS of it: or they for whom He intercedes,—who are they? All mankind? This I apprehend to be the prevalent opinion: but is it scriptural? By no means. The inspired record limits his intercession to penitents and believers:—"who maketh intercession for *us*;" says the Apostle: namely "the elect," of whom he is all along discoursing. And again, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—whom? "all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for *them*." And again, Christ says

* Psalm lxxxix. 3. † Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

Digitized by Google

himself, in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel by St. John, speaking of those whom the Father had given Him out of the world, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine;" and once more, "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."—And what an incentive should it prove to penitence and prayer, that we thereby participate in the inestimable privilege of an interest in the Saviour's intercession.

Such being the objects, let us enquire, in the next place,

II. The SUBJECTS of his intercession: in other words, the things He asks on their behalf. They are primarily and above all things, *the pardon of sin*. This is a necessary preliminary to the obtaining of any other benefit. Accordingly, the Lord prayed upon the cross, when making intercession for transgressors there—"Father, *forgive* them; for they know not what they do:" and so, the Psalmist, enumerating the various divine mercies, calling for thankfulness, places this at the head of the catalogue: "who forgiveth all thine iniquities."*

But further, He solicits for them the gift of the HOLY GHOST, (virtually comprehending all other favours †) to be their Teacher, Guide, Sanctifier and Comforter: as He says in the fourteenth of St.

* Ps. ciii. 2—5.

† Comp. Matt. vii. 11. with Luke xi. 13.

Digitized by Google

John. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth."—And again, "the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." We are informed in the seventeenth chapter of the same gospel, that other matters of request are their being "kept from evil," "sanctified through the truth," and eventually "being with Him where He is, that they may behold his glory."

We proceed, then, to what is perhaps the principal and most important thing of all, viz.

III. THE EFFICACY of his intercession. This, you will observe, is the last and highest link in that celestial chain, whereby we ascend from the borders of perdition to the dwelling-place of bliss; and therefore, if this fail, we sink for ever into the abyss of destruction. But, blessed be God, it cannot by any possibility fail, for several reasons.

And the first is, *the greatness of the Intercessor.* He is "a great High Priest," "God over all," and therefore possessed of unlimited influence and power. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself." Accordingly He speaks as one having authority; "Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

But, independently of his own essential greatness.

Digitized by Google

He is, in consequence of having fulfilled his Father's will in redeeming his people, possessed of unbounded *merit*. It was in obedience to that will that He came down upon earth, assumed our nature, magnified the law, and made it honourable, by fulfilling all righteousness, and rendering an atonement for our sins. "Lo, I come," He says, "to do thy will, O LORD!"

And again, when his mighty enterprise was on the very verge of completion, He exclaimed, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And again, He expressly tells us, that "therefore his Father loved Him, because He laid down his life for the sheep." What a claim, then, this gives Him to be heard of his Father on the behoof of those for whom He intercedes! Accordingly we are told, that "Him the Father heareth always."

But once more; Christ's Father is *their* Father also; consequently is every way disposed to grant whatsoever He requests for them. "I ascend to my Father and to your Father," He says; and therefore He told them, when instructing them on this comfortable topic, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you;" [as if He had said, "I do not insist upon this: that is a matter of course:"] "for the *Father himself* loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."* And so, in pleading for them, He uses this pre-

* John xvi. 26, 27.

Digitized by Google

vailing argument, "For they are *thine*."* They are therefore the Father's, as well as Christ's; so that it is the "Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom."

It were a grievous mistake, a most flagrant injustice toward the First Person in the sacred Trinity, to suppose Him a stern enemy, granting pardon and salvation grudgingly, and as if it were wrung or wrested from Him—an impression, perhaps, apt to be produced upon our minds by the reiterated declaration of his requiring a full satisfaction for our sins; a requirement in which the two other Divine Persons, as united with Him in the essence of the one Godhead, equally concurred. The Father himself chose his people; gave them to his Son, and his Son to them; and covenanted with Him for their redemption. It was the FATHER that "so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christ then did not induce or dispose the Father to love and shew us mercy; but, by making an atonement to the violated law, *enabled* Him, if we may so speak, to exercise mercy consistently with justice, consistently with the general interests of his universe, and his own honour and glory. But God's own heart being spontaneously set upon the saving of those who will simply accept of his offered

* John xvii. 9.

Digitized by Google

mercy, this his good pleasure cannot but prosper in the hands of the Mediator. Most assuredly He will hear that heavenly Advocate whom He himself hath appointed purposely to plead for his people. Had we all the saints in heaven and earth striving together in prayer for us, we would consider ourselves certain of obtaining the favours they requested: but the intercession of CHRIST is incomparably more effective than even all theirs would be. Theirs, indeed, could not have any influence, except through Him: whereas He, being God's dear Son, expressly appointed by God to be the Mediator and Saviour of his people, cannot possibly be denied. The Father in denying his Son would be denying himself, which is manifestly impossible.*

What a strong foundation, then, is thus laid for the confidence and security of those who truly turn to God through Christ, and avail themselves of his offered mediation. "Who shall lay any thing to their charge? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

How does the Holy Ghost accumulate consideration upon consideration, demonstrating their safety, till the mind is almost overwhelmed by the apparent superabundance of the proof! Any one of the particulars specified might of itself have ap-

* Goodwin.

Digitized by Google

peared sufficient to convince any anxious soul, that seeks the Lord, of the certainty of its acceptance with Him: but all taken together form such a phalanx of evidence, that they may indeed have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. There is a prodigious piling up of arguments, infallibly securing their pardon and safety; and by them the soul may gradually ascend, as by a kind of celestial stair, until it reach the very footstool of the Divine Majesty.

And yet, not a single one of the articles enumerated could really have been dispensed with. Any one link in the heaven-constructed chain omitted, would have invalidated and destroyed the whole. And let us be assured, that however lightly we may esteem these statements now, in a season of health, strength, and quietness, yet when brought to grapple with the enemy hand to hand; when conscience is disturbed, and Satan sifts us, and Sinai thunders, and we are stripped of our armour of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, and forced to realize the dreadful fact, that "we all *have* sinned and come short of the glory of God," and thus become liable to everlasting death; when eternity in all its terrors is uncurtained to our mental vision, and we contemplate appearing before that holiest Being against whom we have rebelled, and descry, amid the impenetrable darkness that pavilions his throne, the sword of eternal justice

Digitized by Google

gleaming and ready to smite us; ah! then it is that all the particulars specified in the text for the consolation of the penitent, prove of indispensable importance, and we see that no one of them could have been omitted.

And deeply it concerns us to be well grounded and established in these momentous verities; if, on such occasions as those contemplated, we would not fall at once from a false security into the very bowels of despair.

And now, I would earnestly ask, what interest have you in these things? They are not vain things for you: they are your life. They are set for your rising into heaven, or for your falling into hell. What sympathy, then, do you feel in them? Have your consciences ever been awakened? Have you experienced any real anxiety respecting your souls? And if so, have you found peace and consolation in the Saviour? Have you fled to Him for refuge from the wrath due to your sins? Have you apprehended his death, resurrection, and ascension by faith? Is your faith *vital?* Have you a spiritual oneness and identity with Jesus? Have you been "quickened together with Him?" and are you now upheld, strengthened, and renewed by the power of his indwelling SPIRIT?

Each of the grand events in the history of Jesus has its parallel in the history of the believer: his death, in the believer's justification; his resurrection, in the believer's conversion; his ascension, in

Digitized by Google

the believer's spirituality of mind; his intercession, in the believer's perseverance in grace unto final glorification. What experience have you had in these things? There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh; and there is a knowledge of Him after the Spirit: which of these is your's?

Is it so, or is it not, with some of you, that you are either altogether ignorant of these particulars, or else exceedingly indifferent on the subject? that while you vouchsafe them a hearing on the Sabbath, you dismiss them from your minds during the remainder of the week; while the world, its politics, pleasure, or business, entirely occupies your attention? I ask, is this the case; or is it not? If it be, then surely your state is extremely awful.

1. O ye unconverted! permit me faithfully to remind you, that, until you truly turn to GOD, through Christ, his wrath abideth on you, and you are in danger of everlasting fire. You may account this a hard saying. You may consider it extraordinary that you cannot live to the world, and attend to your religious duties also. You may think you do mighty things, so long as you commit no glaring breach of morality, and maintain a form of godliness: but for all this what thank have ye? Do not even the Pharisees the same? Religion is a matter too intimately interwoven with your moral constitution; it touches you too often and too closely; you are connected with it by too many and too interesting associations, in your early training at

Digitized by Google

the parental knee, and your early attendance at the house of prayer; it has too powerful a hold upon your feelings in the softer seasons of weakness and of woe; you then are too sensibly persuaded of your need of its support; it has also too potent an ally in your bosoms, in your conscience, and in your reason; above all, it comes to you accompanied by too awful sanctions, as respects a *hereafter* state of being, to admit, were you so inclined, of your neglecting it altogether. Yes; I apprehend that an utter infidel is a comparatively rare character. In a sense—I do not say really and rightly—but in a sense, all are religious by nature. The melodies of our primeval condition still warble, however indistinctly, in the inner chambers of our souls. We still retain some traces, however slight, of our original rectitude: and therefore, hardened must he be by a long career of profligacy and ungodliness; his mind must have passed through a most demoniacal process; the light of heaven in his soul must have been extinguished totally; conscience must have been drugged asleep by the very opiates of hell, and he be given over to a strong delusion indeed, ere he can persuade himself of that most palpable of all falsehoods —a falsehood refuted by almost every object he beholds,—that "there is no GOD."

No one then thanks you for being only outwardly religious. You can scarcely *avoid* being so. Conscience would not suffer you to be otherwise. You would not be at ease.—But why stop here? Why

Digitized by Google

not go all the length God requires you to go, and thus acquire both his acceptance and your own? When you are pleasing to God, then only will you be pleasing to yourselves. And if you ask me when that will be, I answer, when you "give your own selves to the Lord."

But alas! you would compromise the matter with Him. You own, you cannot help owning, the obligations you are under to yield yourselves to Him unreservedly: but such is the diseased condition of your souls, this obligation you have the deepest possible reluctance to fulfil. You would enter into a kind of composition with God: you in effect say to Him, "We will pay you every proper external respect; we will read your word; we will worship you in our families; we will attend your house; we will commit no flaming violation of your law; only in this thing have us excused—that we hold to the world in our hearts." This is virtually and in effect what every mere formal professor of Christianity *dares* to say to his Creator.

And can the Searcher of hearts, who requireth truth and sincerity in us, be pleased with civilities like these? No; nor would He be worthy of our veneration if He could. He loves us too well to do so. Yes, God loves us; and every day, and hour, and moment of our existence affords fresh testimonies of his love. Now, nothing will satisfy love *but* love. The world will compromise it with you; Satan will compromise it with you; but the God of

Digitized by Google

truth and goodness abhors compromise. The true parent will not divide the child. His terms are —"All, or nothing."

Compromise! Why, it is compromising our own interest, our own honour, our own happiness. Well does God know, that in this state we cannot possibly be happy; and our happiness is what He seeks. His love to us is wholly disinterested. He can do without us; but we can by no means do without Him. The religion, therefore, that God requires, and that God communicates, is the religion that man needs. Till truly given to God, we are off our centre: our whole foundations are out of course. The soul has lost its proper balance, and hence every thing comes amiss to it. Our misery commenced by our departure from our Maker, and we never can recover our lost felicity till we return to Him again. And remember this, that the nearer we approach to Him, if we go not the whole way, the more unhappy we must necessarily be, for this plain reason, that our light and knowledge are so much the greater, and consequently must occasion us so much the more disquietude.

Let me remind you of the rich young man, who was only "not far from the kingdom of God." Was he a revoltingly vicious or unamiable character? Very much the reverse. He had kept all the precepts of what is termed "the second table" from his youth. He was so amiable, that Jesus, beholding, loved him. Yet one thing he lacked,

Digitized by Google

and that the great thing: his morality wanted a foundation; his religion lacked a living principle. He adhered to the world in heart; and thus he went away sorrowful, with an arrow in his conscience.

And so must it ever prove with those who have just enough religion to make them moral, yet not enough to enable them to renounce the world and live devotedly to GOD. To-day at church, to-morrow at the ball-room: to-day pretending to commune with Christ, to-morrow arm-in-arm with his enemy: to-day at the Lord's table, to-morrow at the card-table: to-day saluting the Son of God with a kiss, to-morrow betraying Him to be crucified afresh at the race, the theatre, or the ale-house. Who can be happy in such a system as this? Your borderers are of all men most miserable. God rejects them; the world distrusts them; they have forfeited their own esteem: and thus, between the two grand claimants, Christ and the world, to neither of which they will adhere consistently, Satan retains them in more than iron manacles.

Oh! when shall we have done with this contemptible vacillation? How long shall we halt between two opinions? How long treat piety with coldness and suspicion? How long decline her intimacy? What is there in her so repulsive? Look at her as embodied in the blessed Jesus, and say, is she not altogether lovely? Alas! what madness hath seized us, that we are so prejudiced against our best friend?

The religion of the heart is that alone which God

Digitized by Google

will away with; is that alone which can either bless us here, or make us meet for heaven hereafter. Then cultivate it; then strive for it; stop not in the outer court; press into the temple. Get oil in your vessels with your lamps. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2. Have you proved your interest in the death of Christ by a death unto sin, and your fellowship in his resurrection by a new birth unto righteousness? Then advance up the heaven-ward path. Giving all diligence, make your calling and election sure. What powerful motives to piety, to superiority to the world, to heavenliness of affection, to perseverance in well-doing, should you find in the glorious and triumphant facts that have been set before you.

Remember, then, your real position, and act up to it. All that Christ is as your Mediator, you are in Him; being by faith *one* with Him. Is He justified? So are you. Has He conquered death and Satan? So have you. Is He ascended into heaven? So are you. Yea, is He crowned? So are you. A person is crowned when his head is crowned; and Christ is *your* head, believers!

How should such considerations elevate and cheer us! What joy, what exultation should they inspire! What a lively hope of glory should they kindle, under all immediate tribulations! How grateful should we feel (may God make us feel!) toward that gracious Father who hath provided us in his own dear Son so glorious a salvation! How grateful

Digitized by Google

to that generous Saviour, who cheerfully underwent sufferings so unparalleled, that He might bring us to GOD! How grateful to that loving Spirit, who hath revealed these things unto us for our edification and comfort! Alas! that our walk and conduct should be so little worthy of Him, who hath done so great things for us! Let us heartily lament these our short-comings; but at the same time, never for a moment despond, as Satan would tempt us to do; but, waiting on the Lord, renew our strength; assured that we shall eventually be made more than conquerors.

The way to overcome Satan and the world without, and our own iniquities within, is to live by faith in Jesus. Nothing else will do it. Let us look to Him, then, more and more:—to Him dying for the mortification of sin; to Him raised again for pardon and peace of mind; to Him ascended, for victory over earthly things; and to Him sitting at the Father's right hand, for joy in the Lord, for spiritual boldness, for confidence in prayer, for triumph over adversity, and "for grace to help in every time of need."

Forward, servants of the Lord! Follow your victorious Leader through the thickest of the fight. Quit you like men; be strong. Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, press towards the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Be followers of them who through

Digitized by Google

faith and patience inherit the promises. For many walk, who are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Digitized by Google

No. III.

HER HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM.

PSALM XLV. 1—9.

"My heart is inditing of a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad; Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir."*

It has ever been our aim, according to the ability which God gave us, to render our ministrations from this place at once interesting and edifying. We have accordingly endeavoured, as much as possible, to diversify our topics, so as to prevent that sameness and monotony of matter, of which some are wont to complain;—to lead you on through the

* Preached on the occasion of the marriage of her Majesty.

Digitized by Google

green pastures, and by the still streams, of the sacred field; so as always to present you with some fresh view in Emmanuel's land; and thus to entice you forward on your way Zion-ward. With a similar design, we have attempted, from time to time, to improve not only our various religious seasons, but also occasional passing occurrences: thereby in a manner to retaliate upon the enemy; to snatch a dart from his quiver, wherewith to wound him; and make even the affairs of the world themselves, which are so apt to ensnare and secularize our minds, contribute to their edification.

In accordance with these purposes has the following address been conceived. Since our last assembling here, an event for some time expected, and one which we earnestly pray may prove for the happiness, not only of the exalted personages immediately concerned, but of the nation at large, has taken place; I allude to the marriage of our beloved Monarch. From this event I would take occasion, in conformity with scriptural precedent, to elevate your thoughts to a union still more august, in which we all have a direct interest—I mean the spiritual union that subsists between Christ and his church, so beautifully set forth in the verses before us. Ere, however, I proceed to do this, bear with me a few moments while I embrace the opportunity of offering a few passing observations on the marriage relation itself; it being a subject of so much practical importance; so materially affecting

Digitized by Google

not merely domestic comfort, but also the welfare of society.

Marriage, then, is an ordinance of divine institution: the earliest ordinance of all: being, as our prayer-book expresses it, "an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his church; which holy estate, Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of St. Paul to be honourable among all men." In contemplating an entrance into this relation, the main regard should certainly be had to the inward and mental, rather than to the outward or personal, qualities of our proposed companion,—to what the apostle Peter emphatically terms "the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible." It is of the utmost consequence also, that the person be of the same religious sentiments as ourselves; at all events, a true believer: otherwise there is no foundation for comfort; no security for happiness. We embark upon a hazardous voyage without the proper chart and pilot, to become the sport of every storm of passion, of every whirlpool of temptation, and possibly even to make shipwreck of tranquillity for life.

Again: even when these pre-requisites have been secured, there will be needed, for the perpetuation of happiness, a constant and determined guard against every thing that would tend to endanger

Digitized by Google

attachment. We must keep a continual watch over our words and tempers; we must "keep our tongues as with a bridle," and "our hearts with all diligence," and make it our standing rule, never to speak when angry. In the recollection of mutual infirmities we must bear and forbear. In the exercise of that heavenly love that "covereth faults," we must endeavour to "be of one mind," "pitiful and courteous," "having compassion one of another:" labouring to retain affection by the same attentions with which it was originally won. Above all, it is of essential moment that the parties dwell together in the fear of the Lord; that they live as in his immediate presence, and that they frequently *pray* together. This the Apostle seems to assume when he gives this beautiful injunction; "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." In fine, love to Christ will be found the most permanent bond of union; the most effectual guarantee of happiness. Without this, neither health, nor wealth, nor station, nor beauty, nor any other earthly advantage, can secure it.

But on this topic I shall not longer dilate. For a complete summary of scriptural counsel upon it I refer you to the Matrimonial Service, which it were well did all married persons more frequently read and consider.

Digitized by Google

Hoping that these practical remarks will not appear irrelevant, or out of place, I proceed with our more immediate subject.

The human connexion referred to was designed, as we have seen, to illustrate "a great mystery." So, indeed, were all the divine works and institutions: and thus it comes to pass that they are so continually alluded to in the sacred writings, and that so very remarkable a correspondence exists between the one and the other—between the type and the ante-type. You must frequently have been struck with the felicity of the resemblance between the doctrines of inspiration and their sensible illustrations. Has it ever occurred to you to enquire the *reason* of this? Think not the coincidence merely accidental. The visible world was not first formed, and afterwards brought into requisition for the illustration of the spiritual. The contrary was the case. The spiritual world was pre-arranged from everlasting:—the natural, and in many instances also the human or moral,—was constructed with the express view of developing and explaining it. The all-wise Author of both formed the frame-work of creation to be a vast encyclopedia of types, to symbolize the frame-work of redemption,—to be, in fact, a sort of pictorial gospel. The Omniscient foresaw the fall of our race, and resolved on its recovery countless ages ere a single particle of the dust of this system was called into being. "Christ was the Lamb slain (in the divine foreknowledge) before

Digitized by Google

the foundation of the world." Salvation, then, was the original thought: creation the after-thought,—only to God there is no after-thought. Grace took precedence of nature: the spiritual kingdom was the model of the material: and hence, as I have intimated, all that we see and converse with serves more or less to elucidate the mysteries of salvation: as one has said,

"The world's a system of theology."

An example of this, taken from human affairs, occurs in the Psalm now to be considered. The Holy Spirit here compares the union that exists between Christ and his people to the marriage connexion;—a very favourite similitude in Scripture. Let us then endeavour, in earnest dependence on divine aid,—first, to expound the Psalm, and afterwards to draw from it some profitable improvement.

I. To expound the Psalm.

Ver. 1. The inspired writer is full of his subject. He labours and is on fire with it. His "heart is inditing," or, as the margin renders the words, "boileth or bubbleth up with good matter." It teems to overflowing with that theme of all themes, with which every sermon and every conversation should more or less abound—Jesus and his salvation: and thus the Psalmist's "tongue was the pen of a ready writer;" for, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." That ready writer was

Digitized by Google

God, whose Spirit David declares spake by him, and whose word was in his tongue: and by whose inspiration all Scripture was given.* Addressing the King Messias, (for to Him the Psalm is applied in the Epistle to the Hebrews,) he says, "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

Consider this statement. Is Christ, indeed, thus surpassing fair? If He is, how did it happen that, when on earth, He possessed "no beauty for which they should desire Him?"—Verily, He had no beauty to the *carnal* eye: to it He was without comeliness, as a root out of a dry ground: but to the spiritual eye—to the eye of GOD and of angels, and to the eye of faith, O! He possesses superlative attractions! In point of consummate wisdom, purity, goodness, benevolence, self-devotedness, and every other amiable and estimable quality, there never existed his like. The very conception of such a character was, we may boldly affirm, far above man.

How unexampled his eloquence! "Grace is poured into his lips." They dropped manna. They distilled sweetness, as the honey-comb. His "doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew." His were the divinest words that ever were uttered, and the unprejudiced ear drank them in, as the parched ground does the gentle showers. His teaching had an indescribable

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Digitized by Google

charm in it. Every thing He delivered was so obviously wise,—his arguments were so irresistible; his appeals so touching, his allusions so appropriate and popular; his illustrations so beautiful, yet so simple withal; his reproofs, when He was *compelled* to reprove, so withering, so lighting-like, (the more so as contrasted with his usual and characteristic mildness,) that, while the common people heard Him gladly, and hung upon his accents enchanted, gainsayers were confounded, and all were forced to confess,—that "never man spake like this man."

The Saviour being thus incomparably lovely and gracious, He is on that account pronounced by the church "blessed of God for ever." He is infinitely blessed himself; and the channel of all blessings to mankind. He is that seed of Abraham, "in whom all the families of earth were to be blessed."

The speaker is now changed. God the Father himself addresses Him:—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty; with thy glory and thy majesty." This part of the description seems referable to our Lord's proceedings after his ascension, and investiture with unlimited power over the universe. Previously to this period his converts were comparatively few; because that, until then, the Spirit, the immediate author of conversion, was not communicated in the same enlarged measure.* It

* John vii. 39.

Digitized by Google

had been engaged to our Lord, that because He poured out his soul unto death, an offering for sin, God would divide Him a portion with the great, and a spoil with the strong; so that He should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.* A goodly number of the human family, saved from sin and Satan, would be given Him of the Father, as the recompense of his sufferings.† These, meanwhile, being sold under sin, were in the power of the wicked one, in the dominion of the prince of darkness. The Redeemer, therefore, must wage war with him, in order to their rescue. He must overcome and bind the strong man armed, and afterward spoil his goods. Accordingly, the Father, in fulfilment of his agreement, now that their ransom had been paid, now that the Saviour had redeemed them by his precious blood, bids Him gird on his sword, and go forth on his glorious enterprise. And this explains that passage in the sixth chapter of the Revelation—"And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was given Him, and He went forth conquering and to conquer." How beautiful to observe one part of Scripture thus responding to another; the New Testament interpreting the Old, and both testifying of Jesus: thereby demonstrating that all is one book, the work of the one Divine author.

"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh." What sword?

* Isaiah liii. † John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 24.

Digitized by Google

Here again Scripture is its own interpreter. Evidently, "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God."*

Christ's enemies being spiritual, and his enemies spiritual, so are his weapons of war. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual, mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." And of nothing is the adversary more afraid than of this sword of ethereal temper. It pierces the scaly armour of leviathan, and wounds him to the heart.

"And in thy majesty ride prosperously." How soon was the Messiah's prowess evinced, when, immediately after He made bare his arm and unsheathed his sword, on the day of Pentecost, no fewer than three thousand souls were delivered from the power of darkness and enlisted under the banners of light. Then indeed did He spoil the strong, and rescue the captive from the terrible. And ever since hath He continued to ride prosperously, conquering and to conquer; nor will He forbear till all the world be subdued unto Him, and He be the one Lord over the whole earth. Christ "must increase."

"In thy majesty ride prosperously." Wherefore? "Because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness." These are excellences which the God of heaven cannot fail to favour and crown with victory, for they are attributes of himself; and in the person

* Eph. vi. 17.

Digitized by Google

and deportment of his beloved Son were most conspicuously manifested. These qualities, also, the latter would always inculcate, patronise, and defend in his progress. Ride prosperously, then, because of *truth*. Thy name is faithful and true;* and thy very nature truth itself. Thou art "the truth:" Thou hast borne a true testimony for God, and a true testimony also respecting man; affirming the former to be holy, just, and good; and the latter to be fallen and depraved, though yet to be restored to more than original glory, through union with thyself. Moreover, thou hast enunciated that inestimable truth,—"God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Again: ride prosperously because of *meekness*. Thou art the invincible Conqueror; but thou art also the most gentle Saviour; the Lion of Judah, but likewise the Lamb of God. Thou possessest unlimited power, but thou lovest to declare it most chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Mighty to destroy; thou art still more mighty to save.† Thou dost not cry nor strive; neither is thy voice heard in the streets. Thou delightest to speak in the dovelike voice of endearing invitation, rather than in the storm and the thunder. Thou art the King of Zion, "meek and lowly." Chastisement is "thy

* Rev. xix. 11. † Isaiah lxiii. 1.

Digitized by Google

strange work;" and thou invitest the weary and the way-worn to go unto thee for rest.*

But, once more: ride prosperously because of *righteousness.* For verily thou art "the Just and Righteous One;" thine enemies themselves being judges. Thou wert eternally just in thine own divinity: and when thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, my holy law was within thy heart, and it was thy delight to magnify and make it honourable. Thou wert that law embodied. Thou wentest about fulfilling all righteousness; not on thine own account, but on theirs for whom thou hadst undertaken; that they, who were unrighteous and guilty in themselves, might become "the righteousness of God"—in thee.† And now, ride on, declaring thy righteousness by the everlasting Gospel. Make mention of that, even of that only, as the ground whereon the guilty can approach me with acceptance. And let the Spirit of truth and of might accompany thy message, clothing it with power, and convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; to lead mankind to embrace thy righteousness for their justification, that so they may escape the judgment.

But mark—in thy progress, "thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things." The consequences of thy thus taking the field, and putting forth thy almighty energies, will be awful. The kingdoms will

* Matt. xi. 28, 29. † 2 Cor. v. 21.

Digitized by Google

be moved. Satan will arouse earth and hell in deadly opposition. There will be a stern and strenuous combination of all evil powers whatsoever to counteract thy march; and the result will be a fierce and protracted conflict, attended with tremendous convulsions and destructions.

But why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? Why do the kings of the earth and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed? Despite their most powerful resistance, "thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of thine enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." Notwithstanding the panoply of darkness wherewith the wicked one shall defend his adherents, so penetrating will thine arrows prove, that, winged to their hearts by thy Spirit, the thickest mail of pride and self-righteousness shall yield them a passage, and they will so rankle in the consciences of the wounded, that these shall have no rest, till they submit themselves, lay down their arms, and sue to thee for mercy.

How was all this fulfilled, when, at the preaching of the Apostles, the hardened Jews were "pricked in their hearts," and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" How has it been fulfilled in all subsequent ages, when, at the promulgation of the same gospel, the most barbarous savages and pagans have been awakened to a sense of their sins, and consequent danger, and have raised the anxious cry,

Digitized by Google

"What must we do to be saved?" Nor is the Saviour's quiver exhausted, or his bow relaxed. Still, when He puts forth his power, his arrows are found sharp in the hearts of his enemies. A poor woman, not long since, being asked her opinion of a sermon she had been hearing, replied, "It went through and through me, like a knife." And, homely as that expression may sound, our prayer it should be, that such may be our own experience: that the sermons we hear may prove so pointed, so edged and penetrating, as to pierce like "two-edged swords," so that the carnal and careless may be "cut to the heart," and compelled to have recourse to the heavenly Physician for healing. "Thine arrows are sharp,—whereby the people fall under thee."

The metaphor of a victorious general, prosecuting his career of conquest, is still continued:—"The people fall under Him." But how?—Very unlike indeed to what occurs in carnal warfare. Here are no confused noise, nor garments rolled in blood. No quivering limbs, no mutilated corpses; no shrieks of the dying, no lamentations of survivors. The victories of the Captain of our salvation are noiseless and bloodless. Wars, indeed, and they most sanguinary, have attended the progress of Christianity: and its enemies—[alas! that it *should* have enemies!] have most unfairly laid these to its charge. Such contests, however, were by no means occasioned by Christianity, which is decidedly a

Digitized by Google

pacific system;* but by "the wrath of man," stirred up by Him whose kingdom was invaded, opposing it: as says St. James, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence? even of your lusts which war in your members?"

In this sense it is that our Lord is to be understood when He says, "I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword." He spake in anticipation of the destructive struggles that would ensue from "the war of principles," produced by the spread of the christian system. It is not the flow of the tide that occasions the swell on the ocean, but the wind or a contrary current meeting it. Thus those moral commotions, are attributable solely to human opposition. The Saviour's progress is essentially peaceful. He does not ride over the battle-field, strewed with slaughtered thousands. His conquests are inward and spiritual. The people fall under Him, it is true; but how? In submission and repentance. It is not *they* that die, but their corruptions. They fall indeed, but it is that they may rise again. They are humbled, but it is that they may be exalted. They die, but it is that they may be quickened to a better life. Wherever He has come "in his glory and majesty," passion has been quelled: tears have ceased to flow; the current of carnage has been suspended; the horrors of human warfare have been lessened. All miseries have been

* Luke ii. 14.

Digitized by Google

mitigated: all blessings diffused. Who then would not wish Him good speed? Who would not welcome his advent? Who would not join in the exclamation of the text—"gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness?"

This, however, must be admitted, nay, this must be constantly affirmed—that they who reject the Saviour must perish by his wrath. His enemies, who will not have Him to reign over them, must be brought forth, and slain *before* Him. They who submit not to his golden sceptre, must be crushed to pieces by his iron rod. He proclaims the acceptable year of the LORD; but He proclaims also the day of vengeance.* He will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such as persist in their wickedness. O that all, to whom the word of this salvation comes may take warning: that all, to whom He makes overtures of peace, would kiss the Son, ere He be angry, and they perish.

The scene now changes, and we contemplate Emmanuel as a reigning King. He is addressed as God blessed for ever, wielding the sceptre of equity and righteousness. As Mediator, He is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows: that is, not only above believers, whom, in infinite conde-

* Isaiah lxi. 2.

Digitized by Google

scension, He designates his brethren;* but also above *angels:* for so the apostle interprets the text in his Epistle to the Hebrews—"Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son: and again, when He bringeth the first-begotten into the world, He saith, and let all the angels of God worship Him. But unto the Son He saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Then let blind and infatuated mortals, with a most perverse and suicidal ingratitude, strive to degrade the Redeemer as they may, the Father, we see, exalts Him to the highest pinnacle of majesty and power: placing Him upon heaven's everlasting throne. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

How splendid his state and court! They are commended to our imaginations by the very richest emblems: emblems which put under contribution the choicest treasures of creation. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the

* Matt. xii. 50.

Digitized by Google

ivory palaces."* They yield the most delicious odours. His garments of salvation; his heavenly graces and virtues: his amiable and alluring qualities, like a rich perfume sprinkled on the raiment of a Prince, a royal Bridegroom, render the Redeemer incomparably pleasing not only to his people, but also to all holy beings. His very "name is as ointment poured forth."† Faint and poor are our present conceptions of this beauty, worth, and glory; but if ever we attain to behold Him as He is, then shall the most gorgeous and dazzling spectacles of time appear to have been very meanness and pettiness in comparison. Indeed, they do so even now, in the eye of faith.‡

While thus enthroned in his celestial palace, clothed with imperial vestments, encircled by boundless dominion, waited on by "kings' daughters;" that is, believers, children of GOD, the *great* King; "honourable" in the noblest and truest sense of the term, "upon his right hand," the place of distinction and favour, "stands the queen in gold of Ophir." The Queen: Who is she? That must form our future consideration.

* "The Asiatics are very partial to perfumes: every thing with them is perfumed, and especially, their garments. And the ivory palaces mentioned are the *wardrobes* inlaid with ivory, in which their numerous changes of raiment were deposited."—Dr. ADAM CLARKE.

† Canticles i. 3. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.

Digitized by Google

1. Let us, meanwhile, enquire—what know we of the illustrious Personage who has been presented to our view in such august imagery? Reader—what think you of Christ? Is He fairer than the children of men in *your* estimation? Can you truly say to Him, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee?" Is He, in your eyes, "the Rose of Sharon;" "the Pearl of great price?" Alas! how little we prize Him in comparison with his merit! How small is our knowledge of Him, how imaginary, how unreal that knowledge! O, seek to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All knowledge, compared with this, is nothing worth.* This alone contents the soul; this alone makes happy; this alone will profit in the hour of death; this alone will fit us for eternity. Entreat, then, of God to reveal his dear Son in you,—to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Then will you confess, indeed, that He is fairer than the children of men,—the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

We learn, from the verses considered, that this same Divine Personage is a "man of war."† In that character He is presented to us, before He appears as "the Prince of Peace." This is conformable to christian experience; this is the order

* Phil. iii. 8. † Ex. xv. 3.

Digitized by Google

in which Immanuel *generally* reveals himself to the sinner's soul. He comes as "the most Mighty," arrayed in terrors; his bow bent, his arrow upon the string, and He aims at the hearts of the rebellious. He wounds before He heals; He alarms before He comforts; He convinces before He converts. He speaks in the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire, before He speaks in the still small voice.* O, then, beware of a premature peace; of an unfounded security. Beware of a fool's paradise—of any repose of mind but what is based on thorough conviction of sin and vital reliance on the Saviour. May you so apprehend the terrors of the Lord, as to be led to submit yourselves to the mighty Archer for everlasting consolation!

2. Soldiers of the cross, look to this incomparable Warrior to fight your battles for you. The enemies He contended with, and vanquished, are the very same with whom you also contend—namely, sin, the world, and the devil. These are leagued in a deadly confederacy against your souls, and what are *you*, to withstand such a phalanx? More easily might an infant oppose an army of giants. Then look up for aid to your almighty Champion, the Rider on the white horse. He it is who must fight for you, and subdue your enemies under you; and this He will do, if you invoke his succour. He has conquered *for* you, He has conquered *in* you,

* 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. Comp. Hosea vi. 1. Is. lxi. 1—3.

Digitized by Google

and He will further conquer *by* you. Yea, through Him you shall be more than conquerors. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. In conclusion, let us admire the goodness as well as wisdom of God, in employing these familiar incidents of every-day life, to elucidate the mysteries of his kingdom. He graciously draws comparisons for spiritual things from almost every object in nature, and almost every occurrence in society; that so, our eyes may affect our hearts, and the affairs of time, instead of chaining down our thoughts to the present scene, as they are apt to do, may operate as continual remembrancers of our higher destiny. And, to a truly spiritual mind, familiar with Scripture, such is actually the case. Almost every thing it converses with conveys to such a mind some edifying lesson. It indeed

> "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Then be persuaded to cultivate a frame at once productive of the highest delight to its possessor, and of the greatest glory to God. Lacking spirituality you are dead to Him, and lost to the truest enjoyment. "To be spiritually minded (alone) is life and peace."

There are, who altogether repudiate spirituality. They speak evil of what they know not. They cannot endure to admit that others experience what them-

Digitized by Google

selves are strangers to. They limit religion to a procession of automatons—a lifeless round of forms and ceremonies. To what a degraded being they lower God, who imagine Him capable of being contented with such mockeries of devotion! How unmeaning to such must our noble liturgy appear, in which the Holy Spirit, as the Quickener, Comforter, and Sanctifier of the Church, is so continually asserted. Yea, how unintelligible must the greater portion of the sacred Volume itself appear! What could an unspiritual mind make of this sublime Psalm, for example?

Then beseech the Lord to make you spiritual. Nothing short of this is genuine piety. Independently of future considerations, think what advantages it will confer upon you, even in this present life. What illumination it will throw upon the inspired page: what pleasure it will impart to prayer, (of that it is the very soul:) what a charm it will impart to almost every department of existence. It will enable you to peruse the volume of creation with opened eyes; to see its secrets; to enter into its mysteries; to descry a world within a world. The heavens will shine to you with unwonted lustre; the landscape will wear a superadded beauty; and the winged choristers of nature pour into your ears a still more exquisite melody. In short, you yourselves made new, there will be to you a new heaven and a new earth. Creation will become a theatre of wonders, a Jacob's ladder, on which your thoughts

Digitized by Google

will be perpetually ascending, like angels, to your Creator, to return to you laden with blessings.

And how will this grace console you in sorrow. It alone is the victory that overcometh the world and its trials; for it shows us their merciful design, and leads us to seek its realization. Spirituality, like the bee, leaves the poison, and extracts the honey. Nor is it less serviceable in prosperity; as producing humility and moderation; and teaching us to use temporal mercies as types of those which are spiritual and eternal. Thus it is the pillar of fire by night, to cheer the desert by its radiance; and the pillar of a cloud by day, to mitigate the fierce beams of temptation. And while it thus blesses life, it prepares us for death; yea, enables us to contemplate it even with desire. In short, it is profitable for all things. It is at once a guide, a guard, and a companion.* If spiritual, all things are ours, things present, and things to come; all are ours; and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

* See Prov. vi. 22.

Digitized by Google

No. IV.

THE ESPOUSALS.

PSALM XLV. 9—14.

"Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou Him. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. The King's daughter is all-glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work."

In our former meditations on this precious portion of the inspired word, we contemplated King Messias going forth on his god-like enterprise of conquering, the conqueror of the world; leading captivity captive, and rescuing mankind from the tyranny of the Destroyer. We next considered Him in the character of a royal Bridegroom, throned in his imperial palace; robed in regal vestments, and fragrant with that "unction from the Holy One," wherewith, as King and Mediator of his church, the Father had anointed Him above his brethren. In the last place we viewed the Queen, standing at

Digitized by Google

his right hand, arrayed in gold of Ophir. To adopt, then, the words of the angel to St. John, "Come hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Let us, I. Enquire who she is; II. Consider his invitation to her; III. Observe her attire. We consider—

I. The Bride.

Who is she? The church of the living God; the heavenly Jerusalem, the spiritual mother of us all. She stands on the King's right hand, the place of acceptance and favour. But whence came she? What was her prior condition? What her parentage? Her descent was illustrious indeed: for she is the "daughter" of the great King—the child of God.* He formed her in his own image, radiant with all moral and mental excellencies, and set her over the works of his hands.† But dignified and richly endowed as she was, she abode not in honour; she fell from her high estate; she abdicated her royalty. Yielding to a false and fiendish seducer, she lost her innocency, and therewith her happiness and glory. The crown fell from her head. She became as vile as she had been honourable. She lay grovelling in the very mire of wickedness and pollution, feeding on ashes, and drinking up iniquity like water; debased almost to hell: when, astonishing to relate, her gracious Parent

* Luke iii. 38. † Psalm viii. 6. Gen. i. 26.

Digitized by Google

beheld her, and had compassion on her, and said unto her, "Live!" "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me."*

But she had grievously transgressed the divine law, and that law must be magnified and upholden. To do this in a way that would at once spare the sinner, and impress intelligent creation with the heinousness of sin, the eternal Father sent his beloved and co-equal Son, the Prince of Life, to die the death of the cross, on the scene of transgression. Christ must redeem his Spouse before possessing her. "Christ," says the apostle, "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."† And now, having "purchased the church by his own blood,"‡ He addresses himself to win back her alienated affections: He commendeth his love to her in dying for her, saying, "Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." In general terms, then, the queen or bride is the collective body of believers.

But more particularly she is,—first, the ancient Hebrew church, for her only of all the families of the earth did God for a considerable period acknowledge: and her, accordingly, He appears to address in that beautiful passage of the prophet Hosea—"I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness,

* Jer. iii. 1. Psalm xc. 3. † Eph. v. 25, 26.
‡ Acts xx. 28.

Digitized by Google

and in judgment, and loving kindness, and in mercies. I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shall know the LORD."* But Israel having rejected the heavenly invitation, it was next addressed to us *Gentiles*—according to that of Isaiah, "Sing, O barren; thou that didst not bear: break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord;" (intimating that the Gentile church would have a more numerous progeny than the Jewish;) "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called."†

It is matter of much comfort, however, that God's rejection of the Jews for their rejection of Him is far from being final. The Hebrew church is put away only for a season; there is no divorce. She will be reinstated in the divine favour. This also is clearly foretold by the same prophet. "Thus saith the LORD, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you have sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away." Then, for her encouragement, it is added in the following chapter—"the Lord will comfort Zion; He will

* Hos. ii. 19, 20. † Isaiah liv. 1—5.

Digitized by Google

comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving and the voice of melody."*

Yes; the God of Abraham has glorious things yet in reserve for his ancient and still beloved people; and for those things, accordingly, they have been so miraculously preserved. In place of being the outcasts of the species, trodden under foot of the Gentiles, as the world's scum and refuse, they shall be the world's life and glory. They shall form, together with the Gentiles, the chaste and lovely bride of their common Redeemer and Lord; for He, saith the apostle, "hath made both one."†

Let us now then observe—

II. HIS INVITATION TO HER.

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider." How graciously He designates us!—his "daughter." Having thus arrested attention, He commands us to hearken. When God speaketh, we should be all ear, for all his sayings are faithful and true; and here especially is one worthy of universal acceptation. The offer He makes is indeed becoming Deity to make. If proclaimed in hell, it would awaken shouts of joy, such as would reverberate from its deepest dungeons. But alas! man hears it, and turns away unmoved, as if it were a matter

* Isaiah l. 1, li. 3. † Eph. ii. 14.

Digitized by Google

of no moment. He has ears for the voice of flattery, for the syren song of pleasure, or for the tinkling of mammon. The world, and its news, and its politics, and its vanities, interest him deeply. He diligently hearkens also to the tempter, still whispering the pleasing falsehood, "Thou shalt not surely die;" while, what ought to be the very sweetest tidings that ever were announced—the tidings of a finished and a free salvation—sound monotonously to him; he almost grudges them a weekly hearing: he hearkens to every stranger, to every preacher of lies, bringing some new doctrine, to draw away disciples after him; no matter how wild or heterodox it may be; yea, he gives it a favourable and eager entertainment; while he turns away from Him that speaketh from heaven by his own accredited ministers, refusing to hear the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely.

Infatuated mortals! hear the word of the LORD. Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Is a full, free, and everlasting salvation tendered to *us*, who deserved everlasting perdition, not worth our acceptance, not worth our consideration? O! may God in his mercy quicken us; deliver us from the enchanter's spell; and say to our inward ear, "Ephatha!—be opened!"

"God hath spoken once; twice have I heard;" said his prophet.* Let us not be disobedient to

* Psalm lxii. 11.

Digitized by Google

that gracious Being who hath done such great things for us. Let us not allow the noise and din of a vain and evanescent world to drown the still small voice of redeeming mercy. Let it engage our most earnest attention. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

Did God address us as *rebels*—did He thunder out threatenings and anathemas against us—even so would it be our wisdom and duty to hearken to our Creator, and deprecate his judgments: how much more, when He addresses us in terms of tenderness; when He speaks to us as a father to his children; when He calls us—daughter. "Hearken, O daughter." "And consider." Christ is very far from desiring to precipitate us into things; to entrap us into his service; to involve us in it unadvisedly. He would have us fully aware what we are about. He would have us *intelligent* adherents. He would have us act like her, in Proverbs,* who considered the field before she bought it. In a word, He would have us "count the cost,"—weigh the advantages against the disadvantages; and then form our fixed determination. And greatly is it to be desired, that all persons, ere taking upon them the profession of Christianity, would thus deliberately ponder the step beforehand. It would prevent much evil. There would not, indeed, be so many mere professors; but those who did embrace the Saviour

* Prov. xxxi. 16.

Digitized by Google

would be far more decided and steady. Altogether, Christianity would greatly gain.

"Consider." That is what the majority wholly refuse to do. They hear, perhaps; but consideration is their aversion. Why? "thought would destroy their paradise." They have no heart to the truth. Thus they go their ways, and think no more about the matter. They treat the Divine message as a common affair. They make light of it. They postpone its serious entertainment to a more convenient season: that is, they venture their everlasting salvation on a bare, naked possibility! I appeal to you, is not such the case? What is your own experience. Are you in the habit of solemnly considering the gospel offer? Do you, as St. Paul directs, "give the more earnest heed to the things you have heard, lest at any time you let them slip?" Do you, like Peter, "*think* upon the vision?" Like Mary, do you keep all these things and ponder them in your hearts? Do you, like Lydia, not only attend to what the messengers of Christ deliver to you, but search the Scriptures daily whether these things be so? Like David, do you muse upon them in your hearts, till the fire kindles and vents itself in devotion? In fine; do you, like the guileless Nathaniel, retire beneath your fig-tree; retire to your wonted place of privacy and prayer, to pour out your hearts before God, and entreat for grace to do as you have been taught?

O that you did so indeed! But is it not the case,

Digitized by Google

that you utterly neglect all this? that, in too many instances at least, you return to your book, or your newspaper, or your accounts, or your correspondence, or your farm, or your jaunt of pleasure, or your party, or your frivolous conversation—and so to bed; till the Monday comes round again, and you rush into the world with renovated alacrity, as the horse rusheth into the battle?

Ah! hence the little profit that attends our ministrations: hence the fewness of the converted. But why deal so madly? Why permit the enemy of your souls to cheat you out of your salvation? O that you would be aware of his devices! "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel"—intelligent creatures; instructed professors of the gospel, calling themselves God's faithful people, calling themselves Christians,—"do not consider."*

But something more is requisite than even consideration: and that is obedience. "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house." This is a command to come forth of the world, like the virgins in the parable, to meet the Bridegroom. Thus Abraham was commanded to leave his idolatrous kindred and country, to follow the Lord. Christ finds his people living in spiritual idolatry, serving lusts and pleasures, carried away by vanities,—by the course of this world; but He "gave himself for

* Isaiah i. 3.

Digitized by Google

us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world."* Its ways and his are hopelessly irreconcileable; so that we must make our option between them. One or the other. We must choose Christ and salvation, or the world and perdition. We cannot reconcile the two. They will no more coalesce than fire and water will. Yet the grand object of multitudes is just to do what Christ declares cannot be done. They would walk to heaven with one foot on the broad way, and another in the narrow. But the attempt is impracticable. The Saviour's words are plain, they are positive and explicit—"ye *cannot* serve God and mammon." Christ will not endure the presence of an idol. If we would have Him, we must let the world go. Yea, there must not be a hoof left in Egypt. Such are the absolute, the uncompromising requisitions of the gospel, and hence their unpopularity. With the greater number, these are "hard sayings." Nevertheless so they are. We must take them or leave them. Christ will not bend to our ideas. He will not abate one tittle of his just claims. He is a "jealous" Husband and will have the whole heart, or none. And what is our heart, either for Him to accept, or for us to withhold? Verily, it is an unclean vessel, which He seeks with the sole view of purifying and filling with felicity.

"Forget also thy father's house." The words

* Gal. i. 4.

Digitized by Google

may primarily refer to the fathers of the Jewish Church; their scribes and elders, who had made the word of God of none effect by their traditions, and were therefore to be renounced. And like them are the priests of an apostate church, who have taken away from their poor people the key of knowledge, neither entering into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffering them that would to enter: wherefore it is commanded, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." But the words may be taken in a more literal sense. Christianity is as far as possible from countenancing any want of respect to parents or of natural affection. On the contrary, it strengthens, elevates, and refines both these feelings. Its divine Author was conspicuous for filial piety, as well as for every other excellence. But when it so happens, (as it does, not unfrequently,) that an irreligious parent usurps an unfair authority over a pious child, insisting upon his accompanying him into those scenes of sinful dissipation into which, in the very face of his baptismal covenant and promise, he enters himself, and thus wields his parental influence against Him who gave it; then the child of God must take his stand. Filial duty and affection will doubtless lead him far: but they must not lead him too far. They must not induce him to overstep the line of his duty to God. He must not do evil that good may come. He must not, with the view of pleasing and gaining his

Digitized by Google

earthly parent, displease his heavenly. When the commands of the two come into direct collision, the path of rectitude is plain.—"We must obey God, rather than man." And thus our Saviour is to be understood, when He says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He does not mean that we should really and positively hate them, for that were abominable wickedness, alike condemned by nature and the gospel; but only that we should greatly prefer Him to them, and that, when the claims of the two come into competition, we should act as if we hated them.

"So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty."—Yes: it is only when we cease to be conformed to the world, and become transformed by the renewing of our minds, that God accepts and adopts us. He loves us then, indeed, when we give Him such a proof of our love to Him. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

And the reason of this absolute claim upon our love and devotedness is added—"He is thy Lord." The creature, however dear and estimable, has not made us, nor redeemed us: nor has any creature any goodness in comparison with Immanuel. Be-

Digitized by Google

sides; He is not only the Lord: but *thine:* thine to guard, preserve, and bless: as He says in Hosea, "O Israel, return unto the LORD *thy* God." This is the grand magnet of attraction: this what draws the heart: when we realize his benevolence; when we believe with the apostle, that He "loved *us*, and gave himself for *us*;" us individually and personally. "For He is thy Lord." "And worship thou Him." What an unquestionable demonstration of the Saviour's deity! *He*, it has been already shewn, is the King in question: and here we are commanded to worship Him, as our Lord. And certainly, we can have little hesitation in doing so, after seeing Him receive divine adoration from his disciples, and permitting them to style Him "Lord," and "God:"* nay, while we know from the Revelations, that He is worshipped by the hosts of heaven,† and hear the Father himself commanding "all the angels of God to worship Him."‡

He further promises the Queen, that "the daughter of Tyre shall bring her a gift." It is remarkable that during our Lord's ministry on earth, several from the city of Tyre actually did flock to hear Him, and became his disciples. But Tyre being an eminently opulent city, the then mart of the whole world, its presenting the church with a gift may be emblematical of that approaching period, when, as

* John xx. 28. † Rev. v. 8—14. ‡ Heb. i. 6.

Digitized by Google

we read respecting the spiritual Zion, "Into it shall be brought the glory and honour of the nations."*

Again, "the rich among the people," or, the richest people, "shall entreat thy favour." The time is coming, when the Church, in place of being persecuted and dishonoured in every possible way, shall be exalted among the nations, and rise so high in human estimation, that monarchs themselves shall esteem it their greatest privilege to wait upon her and advance her: rulers shall feel that piety is the salt of the earth; and account it their best policy to support and enlist it on their side. Nations shall perceive at last, that the Church is their very life and soul: Earth's wealthy ones shall be fain to make their suit to her for an interest in her prayers,—and kings shall be her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers. The Saviour will exalt her in proportion to her previous abasement, and "make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before her feet, and to know that He has loved her." Such being the precious promises made to the Bride, let us now observe,

* Rev. xxi. 26. "As at this time Tyre was the greatest maritime and commercial city in the world, it may be here taken as the representative of those places which lay on the coasts of the sea, and carried on much traffic: such as parts of Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, France, the British Isles, &c. which first received the gospel of Christ, and were the instruments of sending it to all the other nations of the earth."—A. CLARKE.

Digitized by Google

III. Her Attire.

Dress, to be becoming, should be *suitable:* and when persons dress beyond their circumstances and position in life, they only render themselves ridiculous in the opinion of the more sensible. They, however, who live in kings' houses, are gorgeously apparelled; and, accordingly, the daughter of the King of kings is gorgeously apparelled indeed; her magnificence being proportioned to her pre-eminent rank. "The King's daughter is all glorious within;" her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought to the King in "raiment of needle-work." Two distinct articles of dress are here specified:—the clothing of wrought gold; and the raiment of needle-work: what may these denote? The former I consider to represent the Redeemer's righteousness. For, first, in that alone can a sinner stand before God with acceptance; and it is stated of the Queen, that she stands at the King's right hand. We are accepted "in the Beloved."*

The Church is represented in Scripture as "clothed with the sun."† She shines in the rays of her husband. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and glory."‡ Thus Jeremiah foretold concerning the Just One, "This is the name whereby He shall be

* Eph. i. 6. † Rev. xii. 1. ‡ Isa. xlv. 25.

Digitized by Google

called, The Lord our righteousness:"* and thus St. Paul desired to be found "in the righteousness which is of God by faith:" "the righteousness of God, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe."†

This righteousness the Saviour "*wrought*" for us, by his "becoming obedient unto death;" and hence it is likened to "*gold;*" being of boundless value; as well as of eternal durability: for it is an "*everlasting* righteousness."‡ And hence, faith, which apprehends and puts it on, is designated "*precious* faith:"§ and is more than once in Scripture compared to gold.‖

Again: her clothing is of *wrought* gold, because "faith is of the operation of God." "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent."

But further: "her raiment is of *needle-work*." Why this? I conceive that as the clothing of wrought gold signifies the SAVIOUR'S work of *justification:* this imports the SPIRIT'S work of *sanctification.* And accordingly we may observe, that the former is spoken of as a *present* thing:—her clothing *is* of wrought gold; our justification, if we are believers, being finished and complete in Christ:¶ whereas, the latter is mentioned as a thing yet future: "she *shall* be brought in raiment of needle-

* Jer. xxiii. 6. † Phil. iii. 9. Rom. iii. 22.
‡ Dan. ix. 24. § 2 Pet. i. 1. ‖ See for ex. 1 Pet. i. 7.
¶ John xvii. 4. Col. i. 10.

Digitized by Google

work"—the church's sanctification being still imperfect, and of gradual, progressive accomplishment.* But why needlework? The subject is by no means free from difficulty; yet, by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," we may obtain satisfactory light upon it. We learn, then, from Scripture, that needle-work was, in other words, *embroidery*—or work composed of *various colours*. Thus, in the Song of Deborah, the mother of Sisera is described as enquiring concerning his chariots, "Why are they so long in coming? have they not sped? have they not divided the prey? to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?"†

Here we find that such vestments were in particular esteem in those times and countries, and, from another passage of the inspired word, we learn that they were a sort of *royal* dress, appropriate to the unmarried *daughters of kings*. Thus, of Tamar, the beautiful but unfortunate daughter of David, it is said, that "she had a garment of divers colours upon her; for with such robes were the kings' daughters, that were virgins, apparelled." Now, the church being both "the King's daughter," and a "virgin," in a spiritual view, the allusion is evident and most suitable. She is invested with a robe of

* Phil. i. 6. iii. 12. † Judges v. 30.

Digitized by Google

divers colours, in token of her *royalty*. It may typify also the various *nations* of which her members are composed; and further, as perhaps is principally intended, symbolize the *divers graces* of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, and humility which she "*puts on*," and with which she is accordingly said to "be *clothed*."*

Further: needle-work being, as we are aware, of very minute, delicate, and often slow execution, it aptly represents the careful, elaborate, and consequently tedious process, whereby, so to speak, the patterns of heavenly things, "the beauties of holiness," are inwrought into the spiritual fabric of the soul. For precept must be upon precept; precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; while the inward man is renewed day by day; till at length the divine image is fairly copied out, and the heavenly workmanship completed.

Behold, then, the King's daughter in her bridal dress, manufactured by the fingers that garnished the heavens. Clothed in this, she is indeed "all-glorious within." Clothed in this, she may sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with a robe of righteousness, as a Bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a Bride adorneth herself with her jewels."† Yea, clothed in this, the

* 1 Pet. v. 5. Col. iii. 12–14. † Isa. lxi. 10.

Digitized by Google

Most Holy himself addresses her, saying, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair."*

Thus "shall she be *brought* unto the King." Observe; she does not come of herself. "No man cometh unto me," says Christ, "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." And so, the church prays, in the Song of Songs, "Draw me: we will run after thee. The King hath brought me into his chambers."†

I must here pause for the present; reserving the remainder of the Psalm for yet another discourse. Meanwhile I would offer a few words of present application and direction. Let me ask you what part or lot you have in these matters? Have you felt interested in them? Have you understood them? Do you belong to that blessed "body," which is the King's daughter: the spouse of the Lamb? Are you born again? Are you all-glorious within? Are you sanctified? Have you, in compliance with Christ's command, renounced the vanities of the world, and put on his righteousness as your wedding-garment? Have you peace with GOD; and do you stand in a state of grace, rejoicing in hope of his glory?

Examine yourself well on these momentous points, and if conscience, enlightened by grace and the word

* Cant. iv. 1.

† "When an Asiatic princess is brought to her spouse, she is inclosed in a *palakee*, and no part of her person is visible." —Dr. A. CLARKE.

Digitized by Google

of God, gives an affirmative answer, then bless his holy name, who hath begotten you again to so blessed a hope, and adopted you among his children. Seek for more grace to confirm you unto the end, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ: when you shall be presented faultless before his presence, with exceeding joy. Faithful is He who hath called you, who also will do it.—But, on the other hand, have you no sympathy with these things? Do they seem unto you foolishness? Then may the Lord have mercy on you, and rescue you from a state, so evidently one of perdition. What saith the apostle? "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."—Awful text! May you be duly alarmed by it. May you be constrained to beseech the Lord to open your eyes—to turn you "from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan unto God." Remember the words of the Wonderful Counsellor, "I counsel thee to buy of me *gold** tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white *raiment*,† that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Take the advice. It is the advice of a *friend:* it is the advice of Him, of whom it is written, "Whosoever will not hear *that* prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."‡

* Compare ver. 13. † Compare ver. 14.
‡ Acts iii. 22, 23.

Digitized by Google

V.

THE NUPTIALS.

PSALM XLV. 14—17.

"The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

When I commenced these expositions, I little thought they would be so far extended: but, in truth, the mine of revelation is found to be deep and rich in exact proportion as we sink the shaft, and explore its treasures.

Thus, instead of two or three discourses on the entire Psalm, every single verse of it might afford occasion for a lengthened discussion. I trust we are not yet weary of this divine composition; for it is pre-eminently, as its title asserts, "a song of instruction." May the Eternal Spirit, who indited it, take of the things which belong unto the King, and show them unto us for our comfort, edification, and instruction in righteousness!

Digitized by Google

You have already been shown the character of this King of Glory. You have glanced at his incomparable goodness, greatness, and majesty. You have had declared to you the King's daughter also, his bride elect; his invitation to her; and her duty, dignity, and attire. What remains, then, but that we close the subject with one other important particular connected with it, namely, the celebration of the heavenly nuptials?

"She shall be brought to the King: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee: with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace."

Marriages are generally occasions of joy; and in eastern countries, especially, were celebrated by every gratulatory demonstration. In this whole description the correspondence with oriental customs is most particular; much more so, doubtless, than we, owing to our ignorance of those customs, are able to appreciate. And here let us remark, how very providential it is that the usages of the East remain so unchanged as they are; they thus affording living and impressive evidences of the authenticity and truth of the sacred writings. Eastern manners seem, as it were, stereotyped; the very same scenes described in Scripture, being exhibited to the observer at the present day.

Well; marriages being joyful and festive occasions, so shall this divine marriage be, pre-emi-

Digitized by Google

nently. At present the bride mourns; for the Bridegroom is personally absent. As a body she is only betrothed or espoused. Individual believers, indeed, are spiritually united to the Lord from the period of their conversion; but the Church, as a body, is still incomplete, her members not being fully made up; so that her perfect union with her Saviour, and enjoyment of Him, are reserved to a period yet future; even that, specified in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, when, immediately after the downfall of the mystic Babylon, shall be heard that voice which penetrated the rapt ear of the Evangelist John, "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

Oh, what unprecedented joy shall then pervade the universe! When Zion's tears shall be wiped dry, by the hand of Jehovah himself; when all her wrongs shall be redressed, and her warfare accomplished, and her enemies overthrown, and she shall receive of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Then shall be exhibited to the spiritual world the most splendidly beautiful sight, next to God himself, ever beheld—even the church of the Redeemer, glittering in his radiance, clear as the sun; the very reflection of himself; the image of the Image

Digitized by Google

of the Father! Then to the celestial intelligences shall be afforded a fresh display of Jehovah's perfections; the church forming the principal stage for their development and illustration. In her redemption, constitution, character, conduct, in his various dealings toward her, and her behaviour toward Him, shall be shown to the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.*

When out of the rude elementary mass He formed this fair material system; when He rounded the radiant orbs, and sent them whirling on their measureless courses; when He "hung the earth upon nothing," and clothed it with verdure and beauty; when He finally "made man in his own image"—his noblest performance of all—and our primeval Ancestor stood forth erect in the freshness of that majesty impressed upon him by his Creator, and moved in the delightsome garden a kind of terrestrial god; so superlatively glorious was the sight, that the angels, beholding it, were filled with rapture, and expressed their admiration in a burst of melody. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But when this *new* creation shall have been finished, and God shall again rest from his work with complacency and satisfaction therein; when the heavenly beings shall have beheld yet further revealings of the Divine nature, in mercy rejoicing

* Eph. iii. 10.

Digitized by Google

against judgment, and love prevailing over enmity, and wisdom bringing good out of evil, with such inexhaustible ability—oh! then shall their exalted minds receive a still grander view of the Divine character, and a still louder tide of adoring praise break from their golden harps.

But to proceed with the exposition of the text. "With joy and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace."

Who? The Church of God, and believers, her companions or bride-maids; "the wise virgins," in fact, who have oil in their vessels with their lamps, and who, being joined to the Church, cleave to her, and follow her. They shall "be brought"—brought from sin, and misery, and pollution; from the embrace of Satan, and the verge of the pit; "holy, acceptable unto the Lord;" and that not by themselves, but by Almighty grace; brought by the Saviour to himself; as it is written, "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to himself."*

"They shall enter into the King's palace." At his appearing and kingdom, the Redeemer shall show himself and his Bride to the admiring gaze of the assembled universe. "He shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

* Eph. v. 27.

Digitized by Google

Then, after the solemn ceremonial of the last judgment, when the ungodly and impenitent shall be banished, together with their seducers, the devil and his angels, into everlasting destruction, the King shall say to his own, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then shall the redeemed of the Lord return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

O, what a prospect! What a sunshine it should pour over our pilgrimage here! What desires it should awaken for its glorious consummation! How holy, happy, heavenly should it render us! How amazing, that, while the present life possesses so very little worthy of attaching us to it, that better, that true life and its joys should so seldom occupy our thoughts! "They shall enter into the King's palace,"—even into heaven itself, to be for ever with the Lord. This was the Saviour's ultimate object and design in all that He did and endured for us. It was not merely to procure our deliverance from punishment,—it was to bring us to glory.*

To this crowning consummation, redemption and sanctification were but preliminary steps; means to an end. As it is written "whom He justified, them He also glorified." "They shall enter into the King's

* Heb. ii. 10.

Digitized by Google

palace." But who can describe that? Who so much as imagine it, or any approach to a resemblance of it? Its gates of pearl; its stupendous walls; its foundations of all precious stones; its crystal streams; its immortal fruits; its angelic guards; its entrancing music; its myriads of bright attendants; its state, its pomp, its unparalleled magnificence."

The accounts we have of the costliness and splendour of eastern courts are truly astonishing; but how incomparably shall the palace of the supreme Potentate eclipse them all. The Holy Spirit employs the most gorgeous and enchanting imagery to commend it to our minds, and stimulate our desires after it; yet, after all, how poor and meagre are the most magnificent earthly comparisons. Of the reality they fall infinitely short. Its glory is unutterable; its beauty inconceivable;* its joy too vast for human heart to comprehend. Glorious and alluring as the descriptions of it are, when we arrive there, as God grant we may! we shall feel with the Arabian queen, on beholding the magnificence of Solomon, "The half of it has not been told us."

And then the great King himself—the Light of that palace; the Sun of that kingdom; the brightness of its glory, the fountain of its joy; the heaven of heaven—to see Him in his beauty; to see

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Digitized by Google

Him as He is, face to face, and eye to eye; to see Him who so loved us; to be enraptured with his perfections; to be gaddened with his smile; to receive his favours; to hear his words; to hold intimate personal communion with Him, and that for ever.—O! what a blessedness will this be! It is accordingly called by divines the "beatific vision." It is what the Saviour requested for his people as the consummation of their felicity, when He prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."*

On the remaining verses of the Psalm I cannot speak particularly. They manifestly foretel the Church's fruitfulness, and the greatness and glory of her spiritual progeny in the latter ages of the world; also the enduring honour in which the Saviour himself should be held in successive generations. "Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." That is, men "shall magnify the heavenly Bridegroom, and sing the wonderful displays of his love to the Church, his spouse; of which prediction the constant use of this Psalm in the christian church is a literal fulfilment."

* John xvii. 24.

Digitized by Google

Thus shall the Redeemer "see his seed," and the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands. Amen! Even so. May the blessed period speedily arrive! the period when the saints, made priests and kings unto God and the Father, "shall reign on the earth, and the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven be theirs." Then shall they indeed be made "princes in all lands;" and, from shore to shore, to Earth's uttermost bounds, be heard songs—"Glory to the righteous One."

And now, having endeavoured, however imperfectly, to expound this eminently beautiful composition, one which forms a kind of summary of the whole scheme of salvation; and the proper understanding of which will serve as a cipher and master-key to open the whole Bible; let me conclude with an application of the entire subject.

You have seen the near and dear connection into which, in amazing condescension, your gracious Creator proposes to bring you with himself,—a connection of which the most tender and intimate on earth is but a transitory symbol. The original covenant and friendship between God and us having been annulled by the transgression of our first parents, the eternal Father proposes to enter into another with us, of a still more intimate and endearing character; established upon a firmer basis —a marriage covenant; an everlasting covenant;

Digitized by Google

a covenant ordered in all things, and sure, saying to all who will lay hold of it, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."*

Of this new covenant CHRIST is the "Mediator;" for sinners, in treating with a holy and just God, must have a Mediator:† and under Him we, his ministers, are commissioned to treat with you, and contract you, in his name,—to invite you to become his. Do not think this mere theorizing. We are perfectly serious. The case is actually as we state it. What says the apostle to the Corinthians? "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."‡

Let me ask, then, what are your sentiments as respects this proposal? How do you feel affected towards it? Christ offers you himself as your portion; and seeks you in return, as his; for nothing less than yourselves will satisfy Him. Will you then give yourselves to Him? Will you have Him for better, for worse; for weal or for woe; as your spiritual Head and Husband; to love, honour, and obey Him, from this time forth for ever? O! may there be such an heart in you!

* Hosea ii. 19.

† Heb. xii. 24. John xiv. 6. Matt. iii. 17.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 2. v. 20.

Digitized by Google

Hearken diligently, and consider. The matter is most important. Count the cost. Remember, you cannot love Christ and the world too. You cannot be faithful to Him, and obey iniquity. Make then your option, one or the other. Choose, this day, whom you will serve. Whatever rights, privileges, and advantages accrue to the wife under the marriage contract, as love, protection, sympathy, support, and so forth, these, in an infinitely higher and better degree, will be your's under this new and divine relationship. Christ will love you with an everlasting love. He will protect you from all dangers, as the apple of his eye; He will be surety for all your debts to eternal justice; He will stand between you and eternal wrath; He will be your Guide, Guard, and Friend; your Counsellor, your Comforter; your very present help in trouble; your inseparable Companion, your exceeding and eternal great reward. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so will thy God rejoice over thee."*

O! ye that are weak or desolate in life; inexperienced and unprotected in a dangerous world; ye that stand in need of a Friend who can feel for you and defend you; one with whom you can take sweet counsel, and into whose faithful and feeling bosom you can freely disburthen all your woes—what think ye of Christ?

Is there not in Him every thing to call forth and

* Isaiah lxii. 5.

Digitized by Google

rivet regard? What one virtue that usually generates esteem, but shines in Him immeasurably? Do wisdom and ability win your admiration? In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Are you attracted by riches? He is the Heir of all things:† By bravery and heroism! He is the Prince of conquerors; the Captain of salvation! the Deliverer of the world! Are you taken with greatness? He is the omnipotent GOD.‡ Are you captivated by beauty? Who can imagine his? It is surpassing, Stretch your imaginations to the utmost. Picture to yourselves the most beautiful and lovely of beings; Jesus transcends the fair creation of your fancy as the sun transcends a glow-worm. He is the Rose of Sharon; the Pearl of great price; the bright and morning Star; the Fountain of all that is beautiful and glorious. But seeing that we rarely love those much whom we suppose to be wholly indifferent to us, does *affection* win you? Does *love* attract you? Does *generosity* command you? Look and see, if any where you can find affection like his. It is a love stronger than death; a love that passeth knowledge; a love mysterious and unparalleled. The affection of the most devoted friends is hatred compared with it.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die; yet peradventure for

* Col. ii. 3. † Heb. i. 2. ‡ Rev. i. 8, 11.

Digitized by Google

a *good* man some even would dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Here are several particulars in our state, setting off and illustrating the Saviour's love. First: we were *without strength*, without any the smallest ability to do good; though with tremendous ability to do evil. Again: we were *ungodly*: we had not the love of GOD in us, but, on the contrary, hated Him, and lived without Him in his world: and, lastly, we were *sinners*, violating his laws, and acting in open and continual rebellion against Him, "enemies"† to God by wicked works: and yet—yet—notwithstanding all, in due time Jesus died for us!

O! for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak.

Thus there is in Jesus a congregation of virtues, such as no where else can be found. All visible forms of loveliness and grandeur are but poor feeble shadows of Him. He is the true light; the real glory; the paragon of excellence. In a word, He sealeth up the sum: full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.‡

Why, then, is it that we esteem Him so lightly? How comes it, that we are so little captivated with

* Rom. v. 6, 7. † Ver. 10. ‡ Ez. xxviii. 12.

Digitized by Google

his brightness? that the declaration of these things excites so slight an interest, so feeble and transient a sympathy in us? Surely, this is at once our misery and our condemnation. Surely it is our very blackest feature,—that, while our Redeemer is so lovely and loving, we feel so little love for Him; that while He is so transcendently glorious, we are so insensible of his glory. What can be the reason of this? Let an inspired authority inform us:—"The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Yes; this is the real cause. They that abide under the dominion of the prince of darkness are blinded by his darkness. The blind see not the sun, not because it is not glorious, but because of the defect in their visual organs.

Again: even when the eyes have in some measure been opened to see the Saviour's excellence,—as is the case with all his people,—their views of Him, and consequently their estimation of Him, are apt to become dimmed and abated by reason of the world coming in between them and Him; just as the sun is hidden from our gaze by the intervention of the moon. O! may God shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ: that, seeing Him as He is, we may admire Him as He deserves.

We may care little for these things now: the creature may have superior attractions in our eyes

Digitized by Google

to the Creator: we may turn away from the adorable IMMANUEL, and give our whole attention to *human* friends; but, let us recollect that, in so doing we adopt a course destructive of our permanent peace; and that those on whom we lavish so idolatrous a regard may most cruelly disappoint us, and prove the sources of our most bitter vexation and punishment. At all events, either we or they must die. Sooner or later, a separation must ensue, —a sore and poignant severance of hearts; a grievous withdrawment of happiness and joy. And then, what would be your resource, if you shall have neglected the Saviour? Would you turn to Him in that extremity? Could you do so with confidence? What, if He should not receive you? What, if He were to give you such another answer as He gave the Israelites,—"they have turned the back unto me, and not the face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee."* O, let us beware of incurring a dismissal so dreadful. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Suppose not that religion enforces any violence on the finer feelings of our nature,—that, with the iron brand of a torturer she would sear up every sentiment of tenderness toward our fellow-creatures. Christianity is a *rational* system: a system charac-

* Jer. ii. 27, 28.

Digitized by Google

terized by mildness and humanity. Let a hell-born superstition, which, not content with murdering the soul in a future world, would torment it before the time in this, wither natural affection, and imprison in horrid convents the youthful and the beautiful: rendering life a lingering death; and making them at once miserable in themselves, and useless to society—true religion is quite of another mould. Her's is a "reasonable service." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness." Her tendency is to bless, not curse; to make us joyful, not gloomy. She prohibits only what is hurtful: she curtails only what is excessive. She allows of human attachments: for her author is the God of LOVE; whose laws are holy, and just, and *good*. When, then, do we transgress? Why, when we act unjustly,—when we give to the creature our supreme (and in that case, indeed, it is our whole and undivided) regard: "worshipping and serving it more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

He, surely, has the highest claim to our affection: and He seeks it, not because He needs it; but from a pure and disinterested regard to our own welfare. He is wholly independent of his creatures—He is the self-existing, and self-sufficient GOD. He can do without us, but we can by no means do without Him. Till we love Him, we cannot be truly happy, because, until then, every thing is wrong with us; every thing is disorganized and out of place: our souls are off their centre. Our moral being is

Digitized by Google

dislocated: the regulating power is gone; and we are consequently carried to and fro, the sport of every casual excitement; and thus our peace, if we have any deserving the name, is liable to continual disturbance.

The Author of our being knows all this. He knows that his enthronement in the centre of our spirits is as indispensable to our felicity, as the enthronement of the sun in the centre of our system is indispensable to the welfare of the orbs that revolve around it. Accordingly, He says to each of us, "Give me thine heart." "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And actually to induce us to return, He allures us. He manifests his loving-kindness to us in surrendering up his only-begotten Son to atone for our sins by a most painful and shameful death: that we, apprehending his goodness by faith, may own its attractive power, and be drawn to "love Him who first loved us."

What, then, Reader, is your determination? Will you avail yourself of God's gracious overtures? Will you accept of the Saviour on his own terms —with the loss as well as with the gain; with the cross as well as with the crown; with the reproach as well as with the honour? Are you prepared to give yourselves to Him heartily and devotedly, come what may? If so; blessed are you of the Lord from this day forward. You have chosen that good part, of which you shall never be

Digitized by Google

deprived. You have, through grace, made a choice of which you shall never repent. Lose what you may, CHRIST is your's; and with Him all things. The covenant is virtually sealed on earth; and will be ratified and established in heaven for all eternity.

But, on the other hand, do you hold back? Is your heart reluctant? Then see to it: for you may never have such another invitation. The Saviour may be nearer to you now, than He ever will be again. A spring-tide of mercy may now have reached you, which, taken at the flow, may flood you forward to salvation; but which, neglected, may leave you forsaken on a shore to which it will never, never return. O! take heed, then, what you do! Beware of turning away from Him, who speaketh unto you from heaven, and maketh you the most wonderful proposal that man or angel ever conceived. Redeem the time. Seize the golden opportunity. Close with the celestial Bridegroom, before He be offended, and cast you off for ever.

To conclude: let us admire and appreciate the unfathomable benevolence of GOD, as exhibited in the transactions which have formed the subject of these meditations. From everlasting He foresaw us lost to Him and happiness, perishing in trespasses and sins; when He set his heart upon us, to deliver and restore us, notwithstanding. In due time Immanuel dies, to raise us from the death of sin to a life of righteousness. To this end, on his re-ascension to his native heaven, He receives of the Father

Digitized by Google

the promised precious gift of the Holy Spirit, to pour it out on mankind in the hearing of the Gospel—to give the message efficacy, and draw them out of sin and the world unto himself. Thus have the everlasting sacred Three been actively occupied for the benefit of the church, in heaven and on earth:—in heaven preparing a place for her; on earth preparing her for the place. And when the full complement shall be made up;—when "the number of the elect shall be accomplished;"—then, behold the LAMB'S WIFE brought to himself; beautified with salvation; and invested with a glory, compared with which, the spangled firmament is dim. O that men would therefore praise the LORD for his goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!

But let us not rest in barren admiration. Let us evince our sense of the divine beneficence by our obedience to the divine precepts. Let us prove ourselves of the spouse of Christ by appropriate acts and sentiments: by love unfeigned:* by reverence for Him;† by devotedness to his interest;‡ by a tender regard to his honour and glory;§ by faithfulness to Him;‖ and by unshaken confidence in his care and protection.¶

Again; if we are his, we shall desire his coming,

* 2 Cor. vi. 6. † Heb. xii. 28. Eph. v. 33.
‡ Rom. vi. 13. § 1 Cor. x. 31. ‖ Rev. ii. 10. xvii. 14.
¶ Psalm xl. 4. lxii. 8.

Digitized by Google

and shall constantly *pray* for it. The faithful spouse will ever mourn the absence of her beloved Lord, and will long for his return. Accordingly, this has been the Church's prayer ever since his departure—"Come quickly, Lord Jesus." And St. Paul characterizes his people as those—"that love his appearing."

Finally: let us be *preparing* for that momentous event. It may be much nigher than we commonly imagine. If, as has been observed, nearly two thousand years ago, the coming of the Lord was said to be at hand, it cannot now be very distant. Then, ye that are halting between two opinions, halt no longer. Awake, and trim your lamps, ye that are sleeping, and provide oil in your vessels. And ye that are looking for the Saviour, beware of falling into slumber. Be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace: without spot, and blameless. Has your love grown cold? have you relaxed in vigilance? has your zeal abated? has a dead, careless, carnal spirit been creeping over you? Arouse, and shake it off. Beseech the Lord to quicken you, that you sleep not the sleep of death. Behold—the Bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet Him. Go forth of the world, of carnality, of unbelief. Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He shall return from the wedding. Be looking for Him, longing for Him, and labouring for Him; that so ye may be *accepted* of Him. Be assured, this is your only

Digitized by Google

safety. We know not what a day may bring forth. I am more and more convinced, every hour, of the prudence as well as propriety of living to the Lord; of walking closely with Him; and being found in the way of duty. Yet a little while, and He that cometh will come, and will not tarry. Then, blessed are they who shall be found watching.

"Now, unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Digitized by Google

No. VI.

HER TRIALS.

DEUT. VIII. 15, 16.

"Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not; that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end."

"We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven." We are born with a nature so opposed to God and godliness, a nature so corrupt and ruined, that, as medicine is generally necessary to rectify the body, so affliction is generally necessary to heal the soul. No doubt God may dispense with this painful process, and by an immediate operation of his mighty power restore us to spiritual health. But ordinarily this seems not his pleasure. He prefers a more circuitous way, to shew us our wretchedness and helplessness, the many and powerful enemies conspired with us to effect our destruction; and thus both to exhibit his power and good-

Digitized by Google

ness in saving us, and to enhance our eventual felicity by the previous discipline.

The various exercises, through which the Christian has commonly to pass, are susceptible of profitable and interesting illustration from the history of God's ancient people, referred to in the passage before us; and there is no room for doubt, that what happened to them was intended to be typical of the trials and experience of the true Israel, so often compared to them in the Scriptures. Let us then consider the leading links of that history, and observe the correspondence with them of the christian pilgrimage.

The previous verse had recorded the delivery of the Israelites from Egypt; which, having been to them a house of bondage, aptly represented a state of sin and unregeneracy. The soul, till brought to Christ, is in the "bondage of corruption;" is the vassal and slave of Satan, "taken captive by him at his will:" and just as the Jews, however weary of their galling yoke, could not free themselves from it, no more, or rather still less, can we, however sensible of it, liberate ourselves from our spiritual thraldom. In either case, One "mighty to save" must come to the rescue. "If the Son shall make us free, then are we free indeed."

And when is this emancipation realized?—At conversion. Then, and not till then, are we "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." We emerge into

Digitized by Google

liberty, we pass from death unto life, through the Red Sea of Immanuel's blood.

But when Israel had arrived in the wilderness, by what course was he led? The direct way into the promised land was short: but for the wisest reasons their Divine Guide did not adopt it. In the first place, the iniquity of the Amorites, the then inhabitants of Canaan, was not yet full; and the merciful Creator, ever reluctant to cut off even the most obdurate, would grant them a longer reprieve. Again; that way would have brought them into immediate collision with the fierce and powerful Philistines, which, in all human probability, would have so discouraged them as to have resulted in their immediate return to Egypt—toward which, indeed, they continually betrayed a strong disposition.* And lastly, had they gone that way, then, neither they nor the church of God had reaped those invaluable exhibitions of the Divine power, patience, holiness, and faithfulness, which were afforded in the progress of that ever-memorable pilgrimage, and which afford so rich a fund of instruction and consolation to every succeeding age.

For these among other reasons, they were conducted through the wilderness. Now, that you may be enabled to frame some faint conception of what a wilderness is, I shall describe it to you in the words of a celebrated oriental traveller.† It is,

* See Exodus xiii. 17, 18. † Belzoni.

Digitized by Google

according to him, "an endless plain of sand and stones, sometimes intermixed with mountains of all sizes and heights, without roads or shelter; without any sort of produce for food." What a dismal region! And even such is this evil world to the spiritual Israelite. He descries in it few or no flowers or fruits of holiness. There is a prevailing moral desolation. Satan sways an almost unlimited sceptre, as the god and prince of this world, and under his devastating ascendancy, iniquity, oppression, cruelty and suffering, form a scene from the contemplation of which the mind turns away in anguish.

Such is the *Christian's* view of this world; and why is it not that of every one? Yea, why was it not even his previously to his conversion? The reason is evident—Until then he was dead in sin himself. The mist, that blinds the generality, shrouded his own mind. Now, however, his eyes have been opened; the delusion has been dispelled; he sees things in some measure as they are; for he "has the mind of Christ." Thus, as in looking forth of our dwellings at night, the light within makes us the more sensible of the surrounding gloom, so it is with him. Filled with *spiritual* light, he is painfully impressed by the world's *moral* darkness; he is distressed at beholding on every side God dishonoured, iniquity rampant, and human nature groaning and crushed to agony, in consequence. Be assured, if such be not more or less our own feelings, we are in darkness until now.

Digitized by Google

The wilderness through which that people passed was "great and terrible." The eye beheld nothing but vast tracts of sand, occasionally diversified by rocks and hills, with here and there a solitary palm-tree, serving only to make the general bleakness more palpable by the contrast. In the human wilderness around us, we are, indeed, occasionally greeted with gratifying objects. Friendship, benevolence, and a species of integrity of stunted growth, are the wildings that mitigate the prevalent desolation; while now and again the Rose of Sharon, the Tree of life, flings its heavenly "sweetness on the desert air," solacing and refreshing the fainting spirit. But the general aspect is barren and dreary. Thus the saints of old accounted themselves "strangers and pilgrims upon earth;" they complained of this world as "a barren and thirsty land, where no water was," and longed for wings, that they might "flee away and be at rest."

Let us rejoice, however, that the time is coming, when, the Spirit being poured from on high, the moral wild will be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. Nor let us be contented with simply rejoicing in this prospect, but labour and pray earnestly for its realization.

The wilderness was not only vast, but "terrible;" exposed to dreadful blasts, and infested with serpents, scorpions, and other odious and dangerous creatures. And similar appears this world to the eye of the believer. He sees millions perishing by

Digitized by Google

the desert-blast of death. He sees sickness and disease invading Earth's inhabitants in a thousand shapes, and cutting off generation after generation.

Then what fatal *passions* desolate society—those *moral* pests, infinitely more terrible than the deadly simoom. How does our world abound with those whose very contact is perilous! with those of whom David declares that "they cannot be taken with hands, but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear;"* with those whom the Baptist and our Lord denominated "serpents," a "generation of vipers." Nor is it with such only that we wrestle, but with spiritual enemies; with that "old serpent," the devil, and his confederates. He it is who stirs up the venomous nature of man to perpetrate such horrific enormities; that worketh in the children of disobedience. They "are of their father the devil, and the works of their father they will do."

Nor does he confine his attacks to them: he assaults the children of God themselves; exciting them to wrath, and vanity, and envy, and discontent; yea, rousing in them at times perfect paroxysms of violent emotions. How is it that they sometimes appear less amiable, and are betrayed into acts of greater wickedness than some of the unconverted,† but that the adversary generally leaves his own un-

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.

† For instance, David.

Digitized by Google

molested, knowing them to be secure in his power, and that their very apparent amiableness and purity may prove a snare to them, by deceiving them as to their real state, and inducing them to build their hopes on a false foundation? Whereas, against the godly he concentrates his malice, to distress, if he cannot destroy them, and by their scandalous falls to bring piety itself into disrepute. O! he is indeed "the *old* serpent," practised in subtilty; and well does it behove us to watch and pray that we enter not into his temptations.

The Israelites presently arrived at Mount Sinai: when the Lord descended in terrible majesty and delivered his law with appalling pomp of thunderings and lightnings and voices: insomuch, that they intreated that the words might not be so spoken to them any more. And so, not unfrequently the christian pilgrim is brought to the mount of trembling, to be still more deeply convinced of sin, severed from self-righteousness, and led to make Christ his "ALL." He is doomed to suffer the terrors of the Lord with a troubled mind. The thunders of the law drown for the time the promises of the gospel. The cloudy summits of Sinai obscure his view of the Sun of righteousness. His soul is mantled with the shadow of death; he goes mourning under the hidings of Jehovah's countenance; seeming to hang over the infernal pit; his life drawing nigh to the grave. O! how utterly unavailing are all human efforts to soothe his wounded spirit, or

Digitized by Google

extricate the dart that rankles in his conscience! This is the grief of all griefs: because in every other the sufferer can look up to GOD in hope of succour; but it is the sting of this that the unhappy individual supposes himself forsaken of God, and marked out for signal vengeance. Egregious misconception! dangerous device of the wicked one! Mourners in Zion! be not ignorant of his devices. He was a liar from the beginning: therefore turn away from him at once. Hold no parley with him. Spurn suggestions so ungenerous toward GOD; so perilous to yourselves. Be of good cheer. God hath *not* cast you off; nor will He. Wait upon Him in the way of his ordinances and commandments; in prayer and the active discharge of your duties; and depend upon it, you will not so wait upon Him in vain. He meeteth them that work righteousness. "He is good to them that wait for Him; to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD." "For the LORD will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies: for He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."* No: for "God is love;" "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He *hath* been gracious, and He *will* be gracious: He *hath* delivered, and He will yet de-

* Lam. iii. 25—33.

Digitized by Google

liver. Thousands of his dear children, who have passed through the same gloomy cloud, and afterwards emerged into the sunshine of his smile, and lived happily, and died triumphantly, have set their seal to his faithfulness and mercy. You have a Saviour, too, who is touched with a feeling of your infirmity; having been tempted in all points, like as you are. He endured this very grief in an inconceivable degree: it was the bitterest cup of all that He drank, when He exclaimed, "My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me?" So that, "He himself having suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." "He will speak peace to his people and to his saints." "Unto you that fear his name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Come, then, and let us return unto the LORD, for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth." And oh! how inexpressibly sweet, will be that time of refreshing from the presence of the LORD, after these clouds shall all have passed away! When God giveth peace, it is a peace indeed: *his* peace; a peace that passeth understanding. "Who then is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light: let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."

Digitized by Google

To proceed. A well-known discomfort in a wilderness is the scarcity of water. The same traveller, already quoted, thus describes it. "Generally speaking, in a desert there are few springs of water, some of them at the distance of four, six, and eight days journey from one another; and not all of sweet water; on the contrary, it is generally salt or bitter; so that if the thirsty traveller drinks of it, his thirst is increased, and he suffers more than before. But when the calamity happens, that the next well which is so anxiously sought for is found dry, the misery of such a situation cannot well be described. The camels, which afford the only means of escape, are so thirsty that they cannot proceed to another well, and if the traveller kills them to extract the little liquid that remains in their stomachs, he himself cannot advance any further. The situation is dreadful, and admits of no resource. Many perish of the most horrible thirst. It is then that the value of a cup of cold water is really felt."—This account is valuable, from the forcible illustration it affords to many passages of Scripture. Hence we can better appreciate the intensity of the Psalmist's desires, when he says to God, "my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is."* O! for the piety of David! O! that we all with equal intensity thirsted for the living water from the well of salvation!

* Psalm lxiii. 1.

Digitized by Google

The want of the natural element described in the above extract, was painfully felt by the Israelites. At Kadesh there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron.* They, according to their custom on such emergencies, fell upon their faces before God, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them: "and the Lord directed Moses to take his rod, and gather the assembly together, he and Aaron his brother, and speak unto the rock before their eyes, and it should give forth water."†

On this occasion it was, that the illustrious leader of Israel was betrayed into that fatal offence, which excluded him from Canaan. His calm and meek spirit was roused and ruffled; and instead of *speaking* to the rock, as he had been commanded to do, he *smote* it. Moreover, he "spake unadvisedly" in calling the people "*rebels*," and appeared to assume to *himself* the power of performing the miracle: "must *we* fetch you water out of this rock."‡

However, the transaction, though painful, was eminently typical. It fore-signified an important gospel fact—the giving of the Holy Spirit of God, to revive his fainting and drooping church. There was something peculiarly remarkable in water being elicited from a *rock of flint*, from which we should rather have expected *fire*: but does not this beautifully symbolize the divine goodness, which sup-

* Num. xx. 2—5. † Ver. 7, 8. ‡ Ver. 10.

Digitized by Google

plies us with the water of salvation, instead of consuming us with the fire of wrath? When Christ, "the spiritual rock," suffered on the cross for our violations of the law, given by Moses, He may figuratively be said to have been smitten by Moses' rod: and then, out of his side came forth blood and water: one the emblem of our *justification*, the other, of our *sanctification*.

How is it that Jehovah's people are enabled to renounce their once beloved sins, and to lead a new life: to deny themselves, to conquer Satan, and to be faithful unto death? Could they do all this of themselves? No, of themselves they are as weak and vile as others. But they have a secret brook, of which they drink, and lift up their heads. Dear Reader, know you that brook? have you drank of it? can you say from experience of the world's wells, "whoso drinketh of them shall thirst again;" (like those who drink of the brackish streams of Arabia:) but "whoso drinketh of the water that Christ giveth shall never thirst; but have in himself a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life?" Blessed are they who can experimentally affirm this.

But there is another instance of the Lord's kindness to his people mentioned in the text—it is the communication of that miraculous food—the MANNA: "who fed thee in the wilderness with manna." This was a singular, sweet food, rained down for them morning by morning, in such quantity as was

Digitized by Google

required for the day. And has not the Christian pilgrim *his* manna also? Oh yes—the analogy holds true in every particular. He has in Jesus "the hidden manna;" the heavenly provision: the very bread of life itself. Christ's flesh is "meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed." On Him the Christian feedeth by faith. Meditation on his life, death, and intercession nourishes and strengthens his heart; and thus he is renewed day by day, and finds the Saviour's grace all-sufficient for him.

We now come to the end and purpose of God in all these varied dealings with his people. It was "to humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart, that He might do them good at the latter end." And such is the object of all his corrective dispensations. "As a man chastises his son, so the Lord chastises us." In our unrenewed state we are not prepared properly and safely to enjoy prosperity. It would prove a snare and a curse to us. Till we be humbled, purified, and renewed; till we have known GOD and ourselves; till we have been convinced of sin, and led to a Saviour by divine grace; till we have been taught our foolishness and weakness, had our corruptions mortified, and our souls brought to live upon Christ as our "ALL,"—till then the temple of our bliss is based on sand: its foundation is in the dust; it may at any moment give way, and plunge us in an abyss of eternal wretchedness.

But let us consider the passage a little more par-

Digitized by Google

ticularly. 1. Jehovah exercised them thus, that He might *humble them.* Pride is the moral epidemic of our nature. It lies at the very root of our being: so that, as a wise and pious divine affirms, were we gradually to divest ourselves of all the vices that infest our nature, we would undoubtedly find this the last, and most difficult to put off.* Pride discovers itself in young and old; in rich and poor, in a variety of ways; in vanity of dress; in a desire to seem wiser, or better, or greater, or wealthier, or more respectable than we really are: in envy at others' prosperity, in jealousy at others' praise, in impatience of reproof, in discontentedness with our lot; and in a thousand evil tempers and dispositions. Of pride it comes that many reject the gospel; offended at its humbling and mortifying doctrines; from the same cause it is, that numbers more will not come to hear it, because their clothes are not as handsome as they think themselves entitled to appear in. From pride proceed the numberless disputes, brawls, and animosities that embitter both social and domestic life. "Only by pride cometh contention."†—In a word, to this fell source may be traced almost every sin and sorrow that spread their acrid waters over the withered surface of human society. It embitters all our blessings and lends an additional sting to all our distresses. It is a root of all evil. It is the abominable thing which God principally hateth. It is the spawn of hell, and the torment of earth. It

* Hooker. † Prov. xiii. 10.

Digitized by Google

was the ruin of angels and of man. And surely, never was this vice so conspicuous as at present. If there be one sin that more than another characterizes our age, it is PRIDE. It is strikingly manifest in the setting up of human reason against divine revelation; in the boasting that is made of the march of intellect, and of the sufficiency of human nature, by means of secular education, to regenerate the world: and this notwithstanding ages of experience to the contrary. It is further fearfully observable in the general spirit of insubordination now abroad. There is hardly any such thing as submission or obedience. The child exalts himself against his parent, the servant against his master, the apprentice against his employer: the hearer against his teacher: and the subject against his prince. And what is the result? Was the world ever more disturbed, or more unhappy?

O! that England would humble herself under the mighty hand of GOD, that now lies so heavy upon her, and turn from her pride, ingratitude, and ungodliness, before iniquity be her ruin!

Pride being so offensive to God, as well as so hurtful to man, the object of all his dealings with us, whether nationally or individually, is to mortify and subdue it: for prosperity puffs up, but adversity tends to humble and sober us. "That he might humble thee."

A further end of the All-wise, in thus leading these wanderers, was to "*prove*" them; to prove

Digitized by Google

the genuineness of their piety; to test their fidelity to himself, "whether they *would* keep his commandments or no."* He indeed knew full well what was in their hearts; but *they* knew it not; and He desired that they should. Nothing discovers the lurking evils of the soul more than affliction. It is to the heart what fire is to metal, or the storm to the sea; it stirs the soul to its depths, and causes it to cast forth all its impurities. It manifests the pride, the impatience, the fretfulness, the rebelliousness of our nature against GOD.

And what was the intended issue of all? That He might "do them good at the latter end." Yes, the gracious and merciful Disposer of our lot has no pleasure in afflicting. It is "his strange work."† He does it, not because it gratifies Him, but because it benefits his people. He doth it "for their profit, to make them partakers of his holiness;" in other words, to make them truly and permanently happy. How graciously did He deal with this very race, in bringing them at length, after all their weary wanderings, safe to their promised inheritance; and how much more sweet was their enjoyment of it after all their previous tribulations!

Learn then, you that are in affliction, to be patient and of good courage. If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. You may have been long depressed, even to the verge of

* Deut. viii. 2. † Isaiah xxviii. 21.

Digitized by Google

despondency. You may have been tempted to interpret your trials as marks of the Divine displeasure and hostility. You may have been led to suspect that God hates you, and takes a kind of pleasure in resisting you, in crossing your desires, and marring all your projects. You may have adopted, as applicable to your own condition, the complaint of Jeremiah; "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is He turned; He turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath He made old; He hath broken my bones; He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places: He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out: He hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone; He hath made my paths crooked."

But call to remembrance the precious declarations of the word of truth, that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. If we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons." "He moves in a mysterious way." His thoughts are not as our thoughts; neither are our ways his ways. A weak and over-fond father suffers his children to do as they please—throws the rein upon their necks, so that they become, like the sons of Eli, pests to society and calamities to himself. This is one

Digitized by Google

grand evil of the day. Through the sinful relaxation of parental authority, all authority whatever is gradually undermined. But a wise and prudent parent, who consults his child's interest, chastens him betimes, and trains him up in the way he should go, by wholesome discipline and instruction. Thus doth our heavenly Father with all his children, who shall be heirs of his kingdom. He humbles them and corrects them, that He may sanctify and make them meet to be partakers of that happy inheritance.

Accordingly, if we look into the inspired records, we shall find that God's most favoured servants have been all brought up in the school of adversity. Look, for instance, at Abraham. Called to leave his country and kindred, and go forth, not knowing whither, he came by the Divine guidance into the land of Canaan, a land of strangers and idolaters, without so much ground therein, as he could set his foot upon. Yet, though thus small his beginning, how greatly did his latter end increase! He arose, by God's blessing, to opulence, and became "a mighty prince among them."* How trying also was the early history of Joseph! Sold by his own brethren into bondage—reduced to be a slave in a foreign country, afar from the affectionate endearments of home; and afterwards plunged into a dungeon, under an unjust and scandalous accusa-

* Gen. xxiii. 6.

Digitized by Google

tion; yet to what an illustrious height of eminence and honour was he also ultimately elevated. And though the path of his venerable parent was for a long while dark and stormy, how peaceful and serene was the evening of his day!* Ye have heard also of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. And surely it is better to have the storm in our faces in the outset of the journey, when the spirit is buoyant, and our energies are fresh, and even gain strength by opposition, than to encounter its chilling assault in the decline of life, when vigour is diminished, and the nerves are unstrung, and when reverses would be the more painfully felt, after preceding prosperity. Be assured, "it is good to bear the yoke in youth."†

Affliction is God's pruning-knife, wherewith He detaches from the soul those "superfluities of naughtiness," and those cankers of corruption, which, like redundant foliage and diseases in a tree, would exhaust its strength and prevent its fruitfulness.‡ It is "the furnace" into which He casts his precious gold, not to destroy, but refine it.§ And even as a goldsmith will not leave the mass

* It has been supposed that the name of "Israel" was given to the Church of God for this reason especially,--that it indicates her present afflictive condition.

† Lam. iii. 27. ‡ Heb. xii. 11. § Isa. xlviii. 10.

Digitized by Google

in the crucible, and go his way, but sit by it and watch it attentively, to take it out at the critical moment, beyond which, were it suffered to remain, the whole process would be marred; so, God declares that He will "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."* Nor can we question, but that He will not suffer the trial to continue a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. As one has said—"when affliction has its end, there will be an end to the affliction."

Once more; sorrow is God's school, in which He educates all his children. "Before I was afflicted I went astray," said David; and so might many say: "but now have I kept thy word." Plants grow most at night and in dark weather. What rapid growth in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ does the Christian often attain in the night of trouble! Its

> "Darkness shows him worlds of light
> He never saw by day."

Beauties in the Bible, before unperceived, now beam out with heavenly brilliancy. Then it is we learn indeed the bitterness of sin, the sweetness of a Saviour, the vanity of the world, and the value of things divine and eternal. It has been truly said,

* Mal. iii. 2, 3.

Digitized by Google

that heaven never appears so bright as when seen through tears. And, watered by those showers of sorrow, how fragrant do our graces become! Thus "our light affliction, which (compared with eternity) is but for a moment, worketh for us, (in the way of qualification,) a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Be patient, then, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though your path be steep and rugged, and you wander in a wilderness of misery and distress, and your sorrows seem interminable, like wave succeeding wave, the last the heaviest; "yet surely there is an end, and your expectation shall not be cut off." Deliverance will arrive, sooner perhaps than you are aware. In patience then possess your soul. *Pray for faith;* for "he that believeth shall not make haste." "Behold, we count them happy that endure," says St. James. Let not Satan gain an advantage over you by souring your spirits or producing fretfulness. "Fret not yourselves in any wise to do evil;" but "glorify the Lord in the fires," by a cheerful endurance of his will. That you may be able to do so, look continually to JESUS for his Holy Spirit; and account it a privilege in any respect to resemble Him who was emphatically the "Man of sorrows." Be far less anxious to have your trials discontinued, than to have them sanctified,—to have them made productive of their proper effect; that

Digitized by Google

you may not have suffered them in vain. No calamity so great as an affliction lost. Whereas, acquiescence in the will of GOD is the greatest of blessings. Be very earnest then in prayer for this gracious state of mind. Fall in with the Lord's kind design in chastening you, and strive that it be fully answered in your deepened humility, in your increased deadness to the world, in your learning more of your own weakness and Christ's all-sufficiency; that, "after you have suffered awhile, He may make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you." When the heavenly Refiner sees his own image on the mass, He will take it out of the fire; and when you are purified, you shall come forth like gold.

Freedom from afflictions were no good token. The lapidary cuts a diamond, or other precious stone, to make it more lustrous; but no one thinks of bestowing labour on a common pebble. So, if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons; "But if we be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards, and not sons." Who then would be without that evidence of legitimacy,—that stamp and badge of a true Christian? Woe unto those that are at ease in Zion! "Moab hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel; therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed." "Because they have no changes, they fear not God." Such is the awful result of unsanc-

Digitized by Google

tified prosperity. Now consider this, ye that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness; ye, whose lives have been one unbroken flow of carnal mirth and joviality; ye, who are living at ease in your possessions, regarding not the work of the Lord, neither considering the operation of his hands. Take heed, that ye be not receiving your good things in this life—your heaven upon earth. Diligently examine how point your hearts. Remember that "to be carnally minded is death;" and beseech of God, that though it be through whole wildernesses of sorrow, you may reach at length the land of everlasting joy.

In fine; as it is with individual believers, so also with the Church of God collectively. This world has ever been to her an inhospitable region; a land of deserts and pits; a land which has been reddened with her blood, as she journeyed through it with wounded body and weary feet. Still hath he that is born after the flesh persecuted her that is born after the Spirit. Still hath the old Serpent bitten the woman's heel. But she "goes up through the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved;" and thus, though many and great afflictions may yet betide her, to "purify, and try, and make her white," yet shall she ultimately reach a glorious and eternal inheritance. Her God shall give her "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He will "take out of her hand the cup of trembling, and put it

Digitized by Google

into the hand of them that afflicted her :" and while to them He recompenses tribulation, to her He shall recompense rest, when He shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire.* Bear up then, thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. "Be strong; fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense: He will come and save you."

* 2 Thess. i. 6—8.

Digitized by Google

No. VII.

HER PECULIAR DEPORTMENT.

MALACHI III. 16, 17.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

THE prophet Malachi is supposed to have flourished about four hundred and twenty years before the birth of our blessed Saviour, after the completion of the second temple; and, being the last of the inspired penmen of the Old Testament, is styled by the Jews "the seal of prophecy."

His book is remarkable for its pointed reproofs of his countrymen for their want of proper reverence for GOD and his ordinances; and for its clear announcement of the calling of the Gentiles, of the coming of the Messiah, and of his harbinger, the Baptist. His name denotes "my messenger."

In the chapter before us he informs the Jews that "the Lord whom they sought would suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant in whom they delighted:"—a prophecy which forms

Digitized by Google

an unanswerable argument against that people now; proving, that the promised Messenger must long ago have come, not a vestige of the temple having for many centuries existed. Our text, which is one of the most beautiful in Scripture, suggests the following topics for consideration:—

I. The age or times referred to by the word "then:"

II. The character here given of the Lord's people:

III. The acceptableness of their conduct with Him.—Let us consider,

I. THE AGE REFERRED TO.

1. It was a very *irreligious* age. The people had "gone away from God's ordinances:" they had glaringly profaned the Sabbath; violated the ordinance of marriage by divorcing their legitimate wives, and uniting themselves with idolaters: and had further transgressed the laws concerning sacrifice. It was eminently, then, an irreligious age. In consequence whereof it was,

2. A *sacrilegious* age. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me," says the Lord to them. "But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings: ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me; even this whole nation." They had impiously withheld from Jehovah's ministers their appointed dues: wherefore He makes the cause of his ministers his own; adopts their quarrel,

Digitized by Google

and declares, that the Jews in "robbing them have robbed Him," and therefore denounces his anathema against them. When a people once begin to undervalue religion, they very soon evince it by withdrawing their support from its teachers; and thereby bring a curse upon themselves. May this nation not be obnoxious to a similar judgment for its late sacrilegious conduct toward our Protestant Establishment: depriving it, by one legislative enactment, of no less than one-fourth of its rightful revenues!*

3. It was an *infidel* age. The people in general had become "disobedient and gainsaying." "Your

* "In things consecrate to God," says the learned and pious MEDE, "none hath the propriety but God:—he that gives transfers the *dominium* from himself unto him to whom the gift is made. If, therefore, that which is given to God be God's, then must those who go about to alienate it dispose of that which is none of their's; which, whether it be just or not, let any man judge."

He afterwards strikingly observes, "Another argument of the heinousness of the sin of sacrilege is, that there was no sacrifice appointed in the law, to make atonement for the same, but only if it were ignorantly done:" and adduces, as a further proof of the same sin, the ancient custom "in dedications to lade them with a curse to them that should afterwards meddle with them."—See his Sermon on Acts v. 3—5.

Let us calmly consider the two successive bad harvests, the almost unparalleled depression of trade, the internal disturbance and general distress of this empire, since the above-mentioned Act was passed, and reflect whether such occurrences are not very indicative of the divine displeasure with the nation for its adoption of that measure.

Digitized by Google

words have been stout against me," says God. "Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances, and walked mournfully before the LORD of Hosts?" They presumed to arraign the divine dispensations: they affirmed that it was to no purpose for them to have served God; though, in point of fact, they had done the very reverse of serving Him: they appeared to think, that those prospered most who disregarded Him: as we read in the following verse: "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." They practically denied an over-ruling Providence: they did not believe that there was "a God that judgeth the earth;" or, if they did, maintained that He patronized impiety.

This history is eminently instructive. It shews us where a nation's demoralization and consequent downfall commences—even in a departure from God's ordinances. Then comes neglect of religious institutions: then contempt of revelation: then spoliation of the church: then infidelity and apostacy: and the issue is—Jehovah's curse and judgment.

What an awful age, then, was this! But even in the worst times God reserves to himself his faithful witnesses: and, as the stars shine brightest in the darkest sky, so it often occurs with these spiritual stars:—their lustre is greatest when the moral dark-

Digitized by Google

ness is deepest around them. The candlestick of the Church has continued to lift its tremulous light even in the gloomiest and most stormy periods: and accordingly we find that, even in the time alluded to, there was a faithful remnant—"a remnant according to the election of grace," that stood firm in their fidelity to God, as rocks, amid the flood of prevailing irreligion. Let us notice, then,

II. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF THIS DEVOTED AND DETERMINED BAND. Their conduct, compared with that of their generation, exhibits a kind of heaven in the midst of hell.

1. First; they "feared the Lord:"—very excellent things are spoken in Scripture respecting this holy principle. Solomon styles it "the beginning of wisdom:" and again, because it virtually comprehends every other christian excellence, he further designates it "*the whole of man.*" "Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man:"* his whole duty, his whole business, and his whole happiness. This godly fear operates as a restraint "from evil:" and as a preventive against apostacy: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." It is a grace to which the most precious promises are attached.

* Ecclesiastes xii. 14. In our translation it is——"the whole *duty* of man;" but the word duty is not in the original; and therefore is inserted in *italics*.

Digitized by Google

"Happy is the man that feareth always." "It shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before Him." "There is no want to them that fear God." This godly fear, casting out the fear of man, and keeping the conscience void of offence, inspires "strong confidence." It is a gift indispensable to serving God with acceptance,* and accordingly, by this feature have his children uniformly been distinguished. For example; this was Abraham's praise, the father of the faithful, "Now I know that thou fearest God."† So God is termed "the fear of Isaac."‡ It is also recorded to the credit of Obadiah, that he "feared the Lord greatly;"§ Cornelius, the centurion, likewise "feared God with all his house."‖ Thus these believers feared the LORD.

2. This fear was attended by *obedience:* for they served the Lord. "I will spare them," says He, "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." They did not swim with the stream. They did not serve mammon. They were not conformed to the world. They were not *time*-servers. They stood to their colours. They held fast their integrity. Fearing the Lord, they feared not the face of man, but dared to be singular and peculiar.

> "Among the faithless, faithful only they;
> Among innumerable false unmoved,—
> Their loyalty they kept, their love, their zeal;

* Heb. xii. 28. † Gen. xxii. 12. ‡ Gen. xxxi. 42.
§ 1 Kings xviii. 3. ‖ Acts x. 2.

Digitized by Google

Nor number, nor example with them wrought,
To swerve from truth."

3. We have next the *means* whereby this noble steadfastness was sustained:—They thought upon Jehovah's *name*—that "glorious and fearful name." As all impiety may be traced to forgetfulness of God, so all true holiness to the remembrance of Him. This is a further characteristic of a godly person. While "the wicked, through the pride of his countenance will not seek God;" but excludes Him from his mind; *his* thoughts of Him are frequent and habitual. God is his great object. He sets the Lord always before him: he walks with God: maintains continual intercourse with Him: and, in a peculiar sense, lives, moves, and has his being in God, as in his element. "To him to *live* is Christ."

They thought upon his *name*. If an individual in society have a good name, his credit is proportionate. Now, what is the name of the LORD? It is "great, wonderful, and holy." God is good; God is love; God is faithful and true; God is omnipotent. His name, therefore, was to them a tower of strength. They took refuge in it amid all their discouragements. While wickedness prevailed around them, they endured as seeing Him that is invisible. By faith they overcame the world. Well they knew, that however Jehovah might *seem* to have forsaken the earth, or to connive at iniquity, the Judge of all the earth must do right: that He who planted the

Digitized by Google

ear would assuredly hear, and He that formed the eye would certainly see: that the God of holiness must necessarily abhor impiety, and infallibly punish it, sooner or later.

They encouraged themselves also, perhaps, by reflecting on God's glorious *titles*. What gracious names or titles has He been pleased to adopt with a view to our comfort and confidence in Him. For instance; He is a "Sun," to enlighten and cheer; a "Shield," to defend and save; a "Lily," to refresh with his fragrance; a "Lily of the *valley*," to revive the depressed; a "Rock," to elevate and support; "the Rock of ages," which no storm can shake, no earthquake overturn, no duration moulder; a "Shepherd," to seek, guide, and feed; a "Physician," to heal; and a "Portion for ever."

They would "think upon his name," as illustrated in his *promises*. There is no difficulty or trial, be it ever so desperate, from which the believer may not find a refuge in a precisely suitable promise. With these the Scripture is studded, as the firmament with stars: and they are all "Yea, and amen in Christ Jesus." God being truth itself, not one of them can possibly fail of its accomplishment. He will "do as He hath said."

Are we then in trouble? God hath promised that He will be a *very present* help in such circumstances.* Are we poor and needy? He hath said,

* Psalm xlvi.

Digitized by Google

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* Are we distressed by Satan? The God of peace hath graciously engaged to bruise Satan under our feet shortly.† Are we anxious about the support or preservation of our families? The Father of mercies hath authorized, nay commanded, us to cast all our care upon Him; saying to every believer, as He did to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee."‡ Are we apprehensive of persecution and violence? What hath the faithful Creator and Preserver of his people further said? "Fear not, nor be afraid: sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself: and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread, and He shall be for a sanctuary."§

But once more: they would probably think upon his name as unfolded in his uniform *dealings* with his people. They would call to remembrance his wonders of old; the many and marvellous deliverances He had effected for them: his wonders in the land of Egypt; his bringing them by so mighty a hand out of that house of bondage and furnace of iron: his making the depths of the Red Sea a passage of escape to them, but a sepulchre to their enemies and pursuers: his guiding them by a pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, along the trackless sands of the wilderness: his feeding them with bread from heaven, and fetching them water out of

* Heb. xiii. 5. † Rom. xvi. 20.
‡ Gen. xvii. 7. § Isa. viii. 12—14.

Digitized by Google

the rock of flint: his instating them in the promised inheritance; subduing before them the idolatrous nations. They would remember also his many deliverances in the days of the Judges, by Jephtha, Gideon, Sampson, Samuel, and others; his rescuing them in so signal a manner from the armies of Sennacherib, and saving them from imminent and seemingly unavoidable destruction, in the time of Queen Esther.

Thus they would "remember the years of the right hand of the Most High:" they would "remember the works of the LORD; his wonders of old;" and remembering them would take courage. For God, the more He is known, the more He is trusted: as saith the Psalmist; "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."*

O ye among his people, who are now in heaviness through manifold temptations, be persuaded to have recourse to the same remedy. In your heaviness think upon GOD. "Be still and know that I am GOD"—is the divine sedative to all disquietude of mind. Reflect on his former loving-kindnesses and mercies, and remembering that He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," draw from past experience an argument for future relief, exclaiming with the Psalmist, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will

* Psalm ix. 10.

Digitized by Google

dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." "This God shall be my God even unto death."

But, again; these believers, with a view to their mutual encouragement and comfort, "*spake* often one to another." Incalculable is the benefit that may hence result. "Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." As evil communications *corrupt* good manners; gracious communications strengthen them. If the former be a savour of death, the latter is a savour of life. If the one operates as the poison, the other acts as the medicine, of the soul. Thus David and Jonathan in troublous times strengthened each others' hands in GOD. Thus, likewise, the Jews, in the time of Esther, took sweet counsel together, for their preservation: and so we find, in the Acts of the Apostles, the primitive Christians doing continually. St. Paul also longed to see the saints at Rome, "that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end they might be established; and that he might be comforted together with them, by the mutual faith of both." And so, in various periods of the church, the Lord's people, in the midst of perils and persecutions, have contrived to meet in the dark midnight, in dens, and caves, and fastnesses of the mountains, to inspirit each others' hearts, and nerve each others' hands. And even in the most peaceful and palmy times, how sweetly are similar results of spiritual converse realized. When a child of God is weak in body and depressed in

Digitized by Google

mind; when he is buffeted by Satan and tempted to despair; when his way seems hidden from the Lord, and he walketh in darkness, and hath no light,—oh! how soothing, how balsamic to his soul, is the mild and tender and judicious counsel of an experienced Christian friend! He finds that his case is by no means so singular, as he had imagined it to be: he finds that like things have happened to others: he finds that no temptation hath taken him but what is common to the believer: and thus is he at once disburthened of a load of heaviness, cheered by the cordial sympathy of a brother or sister in the Lord; comforted by an assurance of an interest in their prayers, and emboldened to hope for similar deliverances to what have been experienced by others. "A word spoken in season, how good is it!"

"They spake one to another." And surely amid all their topics of a consolatory nature, they would not omit that which is the most consolatory of all—even JESUS CHRIST. Assuredly they would especially speak of HIM, on whom were founded all their hopes, and in whom was centred all their happiness—the revelation of whom ran through the long and benighted firmament of the ancient church, like a line of silvery light across a cloudy midnight sky. Yes; they would delightedly advert, amid their trials, to that glorious "seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head," foretold by Moses, —to that "Star that should come out of Jacob, and that sceptre which should rise out of Israel," foreseen

Digitized by Google

by unhappy Balaam,—to that heavenly "Child, that should be born into the world, the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace," sung by the rapt Isaiah: to that "arm of the Lord," who was to carry their griefs, and make an offering of his "soul for their sins," predicted by the same evangelic seer;—to that "righteous Branch, to be raised up unto David, who should reign and prosper, executing judgment and justice in the earth," announced by Jeremiah; to that matchless "Shepherd," celebrated by Ezekiel: that "Fellow of the Lord of Hosts, whom the sword should smite, while his sheep should be scattered," revealed by Zechariah:—to "Messiah, the Prince," whom Daniel predicted; to be "cut off, but not for himself;"—to that "Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth were of old from everlasting;" proclaimed by Micah:—to that "Daysman and Redeemer," alluded to in such sublime language by the patriarch Job: in fine, to Him whom David in the Psalms, celebrated in strains so heavenly, and the testimony of whom formed the very spirit of ALL prophecy;—of this illustrious and incomparable Being, "the consolation of Israel," and "Desire of all nations," these faithful worthies, how faint soever their conceptions of Him may have been, compared with our's, unquestionably would not be silent. On the contrary, He would form their theme of themes; their favourite and most frequent topic. They would "search both what and what manner of time the

Digitized by Google

Spirit of God which was in his prophets did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow:" and accordingly, we read in this very chapter, that He was "the LORD whom they *sought;* even the messenger of the covenant, in whom they *delighted.*" Christ was therefore an object of earnest desire and expectancy with them; and what was so near their hearts would certainly not be far from their lips: for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

"They spake one to another." There *is* such a thing as "the communion of saints." As the children of the evil one draw together, so do the children of GOD, even as by a secret instinctive attraction. Kindred elements coalesce. The world will love its own: so will the church. Believers will still love believers, notwithstanding many imperfections remaining in them. "All my delight," says the Psalmist, "is in the saints that are in the earth, and in the excellent." Hence, a person's companions are no indifferent test of his spiritual character. If we savour the things that be of men, it is a sign of an irreligious mind. If, on the contrary, we incline to christian intercourse, it is a sign, to a certain extent, that "we are of GOD."

They spake one to another "*often:*" such pleasure and profit they found in each other's society. They communicated their respective religious experiences. They comforted each other with the comfort wherewith they themselves had been comforted of GOD.

Digitized by Google

As says David, "Come, ye that fear the LORD, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul;" and John, "What we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

They also reminded each other, we may suppose, as a counterpoise to their outward discouragements, of the greatness, faithfulness, and all-sufficiency of GOD. One had a psalm, another a text, another an interpretation. These they threw together into a common fund, constituting so many rays of celestial light collected in a focus; and hence a fire was kindled in their hearts, of zeal, and joy, and courage. They were lifted above the world; they sat in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; and had fellowship not only with each other, but with GOD. Yes, He, who hath promised that wherever two or three are assembled in his name, He will be in the midst of them, was true to his appointment; was found of them that sought Him; manifested himself to them as not unto the world: so that they parted, exclaiming, "It was good for us to be here; God was in this place, and it hath proved to us the gate of heaven." Their faith was confirmed: their resolutions to adhere to God in the face of all opposition were established, and they went on their ways rejoicing.

Now let us mark—

Digitized by Google

III. The acceptableness of their conduct with God.

"The Lord hearkened, and heard." Observe, God is by no means inattentive to our conversations. Awful thought! O! that we kept it more in remembrance! What hears He in general? What evil-speaking, tattling, and slandering in the social meeting. What horrid oaths and blasphemies in the ale-house and tavern;—on the race-course and public thoroughfares. What wicked counsellings against his cause and his Christ in the assemblies of the scornful.

How solemn, under such reflections, is that Scripture,—"For every idle" (that is to say, unprofitable) "word we must give account in the day of judgment." O, what an account will that be with some!

But the pious discourses of his people, and their prayers and praises, were as music in Jehovah's ear. He hearkened and heard. He delighted to listen: so much so that a "book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that thus feared Him, and thought upon his name."

What astonishing benignity! Every the least thing done for God is, so to speak, noted down with the blood of Christ, as in a memorandum-book, to the credit of the doer. "Are not these things written in thy book?" says the Psalmist. And what says the Lord further? "And they shall be mine, in that day when I make up my jewels." Observe—

Digitized by Google

their names are in another book, "the Lamb's book of life." They shall be mine—They are his *now:* his by creation and purchase; his in a still more endearing and intimate manner by adoption: his in Christ: "for all mine are thine, and thine are mine," saith the Saviour: and being his once, they shall be his for ever: for "whom He loveth, He loveth unto the end." No man shall pluck them out of his hand. He will keep them as the apple of his eye: keep them as the gems in his breast-plate: keep them by his power through faith unto salvation. They have confessed Him before men, and He will confess them before all worlds. They shall be numbered among his saints in glory everlasting. He will never leave *them*, nor allow them to leave *Him.* And why? They are his "jewels." They are "his peculiar treasure." They are to adorn his crown: to grace his triumph, "when He shall come to be glorified *in* his saints, and admired in all them that believe! They are to form a "royal diadem in his hand;" and were even one of them to be missing, his joy would be imperfect, and the splendour and completeness of his royalty be marred.

"And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him!" He will "deal with them as with sons." Having been distinguished from the world here, they shall be distinguished from it hereafter. God will be a Father to them, and they shall be his sons and daughters. He will put a

Digitized by Google

difference between them that served Him, and them that served Him not; so that their enemies shall be confounded when they behold their felicity, and be forced to confess, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

What a noble company, then, have we here! and how glorious and precious are their privileges! Who is not ready to exclaim—"Blessed are the people who are in such a case; yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord? Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD; who is the shield of thy excellency; and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

The days on which our lot has fallen strikingly resemble those we have been reviewing—in a going away from God's ordinances, especially by socialism and atheism; in a growing desecration of the Sabbath by rail-ways, steam-vessels, and other facilities for travelling; in the secularizing of the sacred ordinance of marriage; (the new law in England making it merely a legal contract,) while some abolish the institution altogether; in the "robbing of God" by the spoliation of his church; in the contemptuous and calumnious manner in which his ministers and servants are spoken of by the ungodly; in the unwearied exertions that are made for the severance of religion from education; and in the visible rampant growth

Digitized by Google

of popery and infidelity. *When*, we may well ask, were men's words more "stout against God?" When were there times of greater rebuke and blasphemy?*

What then, let us enquire, is our manner of life under circumstances so solemn? Do we resemble those ancient confessors in living in the fear of the LORD? Our opportunities of religious improvement are immeasurably superior to their's; are we even equally separate from the world, and devoted to the Saviour?

What manner of communications are those which you make one to another when you meet? Is your talking of all God's marvellous works; of his amazing love in redeeming us; of his gracious providence in sparing and preserving us? Are you spiritually minded? Are your affections set on things above? Are you living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ? Are you a "peculiar people?"—To be thus living deeply behoveth us. Times of no ordinary trial are probably approaching. We apparently *need* such times to mortify our pride; to correct our worldliness; to chastise our want of love to God, and

* "An age distinguished beyond all that have preceded it, as an age of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy."

The BISHOP OF EXETER.

Digitized by Google

to each other ;—in a word, to quicken, warm, and purify our hearts. And, if we require them, they are the more likely to arrive. Yea; and their prognostics are but too discernible. Blind must he be, and profoundly ignorant of what is going forward in the world, who does not perceive that an evil spirit is busily at work; a spirit of pride, and insolence, and insubordination; "a spirit of daring blasphemy and bold infidelity; a spirit of impious fanaticism and of damnable heresy, and of open disregard of God's word, ordinances, and Sabbath." The course of public affairs, also, is systematically discouraging protestantism, and proportionately promoting superstition in these realms and their dependencies! O! that the nation were properly awake to its appalling dangers!

Evidently, then, it is our wisdom to be prepared for trials. "Forewarned should be forearmed." Flee, therefore, to the strong hold. Flee ye to the Saviour by faith. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day. Pray for that fear of the Lord which extinguishes the fear of the creature. Pray for that living faith, which overcometh the world. Pray that your souls may be sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus, that so ye may be passed over in the day of coming visitation and vengeance.

It is related of the sea-urchin, that as soon as it hears the roar of the approaching storm, it crawls to a place of security, and fixes itself so firmly to

Digitized by Google

the rock, that the beating billows cannot detach it. Let us learn the lesson which such incidents were unquestionably intended to teach us. The storms of trouble are gathering over the world, and their rumour has already reached us. Let us timely repair to CHRIST, and cleave to that everlasting Rock, from which no trials or calamities whatsoever shall be able to separate us.

Have you fled to this refuge? Then, it is your privilege to "rejoice in the Lord always." When, therefore, you hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified. Remember your Lord's prescription against fear,—"Ye believe in God; believe also in me." Live, then, by faith, and diligently avail yourselves of those divine channels appointed for increasing it. And when you meet together, (and Christians *should* meet, as often as possible,) speak the things wherewith ye may edify one another, "and consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and that so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Emulate those worthies of old, whose character and conduct have been presented to your consideration. To you it is given to perceive much more clearly than they did the mysteries of redemption. *They* beheld Christ afar off; *you* behold Him comparatively at hand. They "knew that their Redeemer lived, and would stand at the

Digitized by Google

latter day upon the earth:" *we* know that "He liveth, and was dead, and behold, He is alive for evermore." They looked *forward* to Messiah crucified: we look *up* to Messiah glorified, "God over all;" suddenly to be revealed, to vindicate his dealings, to punish his enemies, to avenge his elect, and to establish his kingdom.

Act then worthily toward Him who hath done such great things for you. Be faithful in a faithless age. Let the coldness of others stimulate your zeal, as fire burns hottest in frost. Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life. If any man draw back, God shall have no pleasure in him. Let the consideration of the amazing honours and dignities that await you lift you above the world and all its shadowy vanities. And seeing that this is not your rest, but that earth is in a manner rocking beneath your feet, sit loose to it, and let your hearts and treasure be in heaven. Beware of the love of money; of the deceitfulness of riches; of your very comforts; lest, being leaned on, they pierce your hearts with many sorrows. "Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand."

Would you be accepted of Him at his coming? Yea, would you welcome his coming with joy? Then take your stand boldly on his side, and follow Him through good report and through evil report; having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of

Digitized by Google

darkness; no terms with sin. The servants of Christ must expect to be watched, scrutinized, calumniated, and must therefore walk the more warily, that they give no unnecessary ground of offence. They must further be prepared to see the course of affairs running for a time apparently counter to the cause of righteousness; to see the wicked prosper; to see the vilest persons exalted; and, amidst all these disadvantages, they must be content to live by faith, and wait upon God for the fulfilment of his promises. "Here is the patience and faith of the saints."

But, brethren, "the time is short;" let us then "be strong, and deal courageously, and God will be with the good." Confess Christ now by a consistent conduct, and He will confess you in the great and terrible day of his appearing. Then will matters be reversed. Then will the haters of the Lord be found liars. Then will they be brought low, and the servants of the Lord be raised to the ascendant. "The righteous shall have the dominion in the morning." Then will you find, whatever may be your intermediate exercises, that it was *not* "vain for you to serve the LORD;" that "the LORD is a God of judgment; and that blessed are all they that *wait* for Him."

May this blessedness be the portion of us all! May the Holy Spirit dispose you to give yourselves to the Lord now, that you may be owned as his,

Digitized by Google

when He manifests his children.* May you have grace so to shine before men, by your holy and useful lives, that you may shine in Emmanuel's diadem in that day, when He shall make up his jewels!

* Rom. viii. 19.

Digitized by Google

No. VIII.

HER RESOURCES.

PSALM XLVI. 4.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

THIS whole psalm is a noble expression of simple and heroic faith in the Almighty, amid surrounding peril and perplexity. The Psalmist supposes the most frightful state of things conceivable, even the removal of the earth itself from its place, and the universal convulsion and ruin of nature, yet asserts the perfect equanimity and composure of the people of the Lord, notwithstanding!

This sublime composition, then, is eminently fitted to be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the pious in all ages, and is accordingly stated to have been a special favourite of the lion-hearted Luther, —always affording him fresh courage in those extraordinary trials and perils, through which in his unwonted and illustrious career he was so triumphantly carried. Nor seemeth it less seasonable at the present day. Never, surely, was there a more

Digitized by Google

fierce and formidable attack made upon the truth and cause of Christ, than there is this moment. Never was there a more deep-laid plot; a more subtle and diabolical combination of human and infernal malice against the pure and undefiled religion. "The devil has come down, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." But if so, it is still the privilege and the duty of Zion's children to rejoice in their King: to rejoice in Him who rejoices in them: to take the Psalmist's lyre and sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

In the verse selected for our immediate consideration, we have a description of the true Church under the similitude of a city: let us then,

I. Notice some circumstances of this city; and,

II. Attempt some improvement of the subject.

I. In speaking, then, of the spiritual Zion, it may be proper that we advert primarily to its *foundation*. The wise Master-builder has selected for his holy

Digitized by Google

city an indestructible basis. "Behold," He says, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation."* What is this? We can have no doubt upon the subject. The apostle Peter informs us, both in the Acts and in his first epistle, that it is CHRIST. Addressing the Jewish rulers and elders concerning Jesus of Nazareth, He says, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." The Jews, in rejecting and crucifying the Messiah, had set Him at nought; but the Father, in raising Him from the dead and giving Him glory, had made Him the Church's corner-stone; resting on Him the whole structure. And so says the same apostle in his first epistle general, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ."

Now, is it not amazing, after such explicit declarations of this very apostle, that the Church of Rome should have the effrontery to affirm, that St. Peter himself is the rock on which the spiritual city is founded? This preposterous tenet, which tends to the very subversion of Christianity, by substituting a frail mortal for his Maker, as the ground of salvation, they pretend to support, by that passage in the

* Isaiah xxviii. 16.

Digitized by Google

sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, where our Lord addresses the apostle thus—"And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." But observe, our Saviour by no means denominates *Peter* this rock. To understand his meaning aright, we must recur to what He had said to this same apostle on a previous occasion, recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel by St. John. Andrew had brought to Jesus Peter, whose name at that time was Simon: "when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone." Mark—the inspired writer is careful to determine the word Cephas or Peter to signify a *stone*. But to what period did our Lord here look forward, when He said "thou *shalt* be?" Unquestionably to that recorded by St. Matthew in the passage already cited; namely, that of St. Peter's confessing the Saviour's deity. On our Lord's asking his disciples, But whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock, namely, the truth now acknowledged,* I will build my church. *Then* it was,

* The "verse in question," (Matt. xvi. 18,) has been happily styled "the Church's charter;" and being a promise so pre-

Digitized by Google

that on the apostle's confessing Jesus to be the Son of God, he received the promised surname of Peter; which, according to the Evangelist, signifies a *stone.** St. Peter now became a living stone, ce-

eminently comfortable and precious, the adversary has exerted proportionate pains to pervert it. Our Lord, doubtless anticipating this, has carefully employed in it two distinct terms—Πέτρος and πέτρα: "thou art πέτρος (a stone,) and on this πέτρᾳ (rock) I will build my church," &c. Had He, in the latter clause, intended Peter himself, surely He would at once have said plainly—"On *thee* I will build," &c.

"Granville SHARPE has considered the passage very fully, and his view is, that the first term, *Petros*, or Peter, in the original, signifying only a stone, thus represents one out of a number of believers; the second, *Petra*, or Rock, is the title often applied to the Supreme Being in Scripture; and therefore not applicable to any mere man." But even admitting with some Lexicons, that πέτρος denotes *either* a stone or a rock, its specific meaning *here* is incontestibly determined by John i. 42, namely, "a stone." Nor is any peculiar pre-eminence assigned to Peter by the context, (Matt. xvi. 19.) as insisted on by the Romanists: for the self-same authority, there given to him, is subsequently (ch. xviii. 18.) extended to all the apostles. If it be contended that Peter was the first instrument in converting both Jews and Gentiles; (Acts ii. 14—42. Acts x. 34—48.) and his having "the keys," be *thus* interpreted, let it be remembered, that privilege was limited to himself personally; it could be enjoyed by none besides.

* Πετρος. "Homer uses it constantly, I believe, for a large stone: i. e. a *piece* or *fragment of a rock*, but such as a man might throw."—PARKHURST.

Digitized by Google

mented to the living Rock by his faith. That Rock, according to an inspired commentator, is Christ. "They drank," says St. Paul, "of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ."*

Indeed, is any other explanation compatible with reason and common sense? Is it supposable that the All-wise would really rest the salvation of that Church which He hath purchased with his precious blood, on a frail and fallible mortal,—one, too, whom He almost immediately after designates "Satan," and who subsequently thrice denied his Master; and whom St. Paul withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed? How would the holy apostle himself abhor to see his name thus perverted, who says so clearly concerning Christ, that "He is the chief corner-stone, elect, precious;"† and that "there is salvation in none other."‡ O, let no man deceive us with vain words, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."§

Proceed we to some further particulars relative to this mystical city. Very excellent things are spoken of it in the inspired word.

1. It is a *holy* city. Jerusalem, so denominated, was but a type of this. It is designated in the text, "The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." All true Christians are, collectively, the living taber-

* 1 Cor. x. 4. † 1 Pet. i. 6. ‡ Acts iv. 12.
§ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Digitized by Google

nacle or temple of the Holy Ghost; and thus, God is in them, inhabiting the praises of Israel, and inspiring and accepting their spiritual sacrifices.

2. It is a *beautiful* city; "the perfection of beauty:" "the joy and glory of the whole earth." It comprises all that is morally excellent and amiable under heaven. True: it possesses no excellence whatever in the carnal eye. To that, indeed, it is invisible. It can be seen only by faith. But it is altogether lovely in the eyes of angels and of GOD. It sparkles in the rays of the Sun of righteousness. It is invested with the glory of the Lord, with the beauty of holiness.

3. It is a *besieged* city. The Church in this world is in a state of warfare. She is a speckled bird; the birds round about her are against her. She is a lily among thorns; a fold of sheep environed by wolves: a city in the midst of a raging sea. Uniformly has it been verified, that he that is born after the flesh, persecutes him that is born after the Spirit. The seed of the serpent hates "the holy seed." As says St. John, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you:" and so our Lord himself, "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord: if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

Digitized by Google

How fearfully has this premonition been verified in the Church's whole history. If we trace her down the tract of ages, it will be by the stream of her own blood. For she wrestles not merely against *mortal* enemies; against corrupt human nature; but against principalities, against powers; against spiritual wickednesses working in that nature, and wielding it for their own fell purposes. What a striking picture we have of this in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:" (symbolizing the Church of the Redeemer—"the Lamb's wife,"—arrayed in his glorious righteousness, elevated above the world, and adorned with the twelve apostles of the Lamb.) "And she being with child, travailed in birth, and pained to be delivered,"—(that is, of her spiritual progeny, true believers.) "And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads:" (indicating the Old Serpent, which is Satan, animating Pagan Rome.) "And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them down to the earth, and the dragon stood before the woman, which was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born."

Such are the Church's enemies. Now let us contemplate her Resources. They are more who are with her than all who are against her. First, there

Digitized by Google

are "the prayers of all saints." These may seem to some but feeble defences, but, in the kingdoms of providence and grace, as well as in that of nature, the almighty Author of both frequently effectuates vast results by apparently insignificant machinery. What a feeble thing, for instance, is a drop of water; yet a heavy fall of rain has been the means of saving towns and armies. Consider, again, the process of evaporation. How silent and unperceived does it go forward; drawing up the vapours from earth to heaven, thence to be returned in dew and showers, watering the ground and covering it with beauty and fertility. Such is prayer. Silently and secretly, as respects man, it rises from the bosom of the Church to the ear of GOD; and is rendered back in showers of blessings, not alone on her, but also on that very world, which is but little grateful, because but little sensible to whom, instrumentally, it is indebted for the benefit.

Prayers are the Church's artillery. As long as Moses continued in prayer, Israel prevailed over Amalek. The supplication of Hezekiah was the means of withering the mighty host of Sennacherib. "The fervent prayer of a righteous man, wrought out with energy, availeth (who can tell how?) much."* Praying believers, it has been truly said, are of more service to a place than walls of brass and ramparts of iron.

* Is not our authorized version tautological?

Digitized by Google

And then there is the redoubtable band of God's faithful preachers,—the priests of Israel with their trumpets,* "mighty through God" to the levelling of Satan's strong-holds. Add to these, armies of angels, encamping round the godly, to minister unto them and defend them.

And lastly, and above all, there is "the LORD of hosts" himself, who will defend this city for his Son's sake, and for his own sake, for it is *his* city—graven on the palms of his hands, so that her walls are continually before Him;† her very name being "the LORD is there."‡ Thus she is "a defenced city" indeed. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. Surely, then, her children may well give the challenge—"Walk about Zion; and go round about her; tell the towers thereof." Surely they may well sing, "We have a strong city: salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks."

And on her walls are set "*watchmen*," to give due warning of approaching dangers. And, as one of the weakest and most unworthy of these, I would lift my voice, however feeble, and admonish you, that the enemy is at the gate: that it is high time to awake out of sleep; to gird on your spiritual armour; that ye may be able to stand in the evil day. Popery, that sleepless enemy of righteousness, that inveterate foe to God and man; that "masterpiece of Satan," aided by infidelity and a spurious

* See Joshua vi. † Is. xlix. 16. ‡ Ezek. xlviii. 35.

Digitized by Google

liberality, is making the most alarming encroachments,—stealing upon us with the stealthiness of a tiger, waiting for the favourable moment to spring upon its prey. It is gaining upon this nation with the steady, unobstructed progress of the flowing sea. The waters rise higher and higher around us; menacing the very foundations of our most cherished christian institutions, and of society itself.

And along therewith, a powerful current of democracy and revolution, gathering for years, bursts forth here and there with the voice of thunder; so that it would seem as if the devil's chains were loosed, and hell were pouring itself over the earth. The fountains of the great deep of human and Satanic wickedness are evidently broken up, and we know not the moment when the opposing barriers may be overborne, and expose all existing government and order to one wide deluge of anarchy and woe! O let those who have any interest in heaven exert it strenuously, that, "when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD may lift up a standard against him."

4. But notwithstanding all these adverse circumstances, the city of God is privileged to be, has cause for being, and therefore ought to be a "*joyous* city." And why?—"there is a river, the streams whereof shall make her glad." The Holy Spirit of God is here especially intended. He gladdens the sinner's heart by bringing him to trust in Christ for forgiveness and salvation: by sprink-

Digitized by Google

ling on his conscience the Saviour's peace—speaking blood; by filling him with all joy and peace in believing: and hence He is styled "the Comforter."

The worldly are wont to abhor religion as a melancholy thing. They clothe her in sables, and call her "*Marah*," or bitter; while her real name is "*Naomi*," or pleasant. Alas! they speak evil of what they know not. The proper life of the people of God is a *hidden* life: hidden where the world will never seek for it, namely, "in GOD." They have meat to eat, and water to drink which none know but themselves. "The stranger intermeddleth not with their joy." If their afflictions abound, so do also their consolations. Thus, not all the war-cry from without; not all the rage and storm of the battle beating against the city, can either cause them to quail, or silence their songs of praise and thanksgiving. Let them be taken before their persecutors, reproached and scourged on their Saviour's account, they will rejoice that they were deemed worthy to suffer for his name. Let them be thrust into the innermost prison in a pagan town, and their bleeding limbs be made fast in the stocks, they will sing God's praises so loud, as to charm the dull ear of midnight, and make their prison seem a palace. Yea, let them be taken from their dungeons to the stake, and they go to it as to their triumph, with the praises of God in their mouths. Verily this is a "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Contrast with it the joy of the worldly. They

Digitized by Google

rejoice, it is true, when their corn and wine and oil are increased: they revel in their boisterous carousals: the viol and the tabret and harp and wine are in their feasts, while He who supplies them all is either altogether forgotten, or remembered only with aversion. They regard not the work of the Lord, neither do they consider the operation of his hands. They indulge in the light and ribald jest, or in the profane scoff: emboldening each other in impiety; putting off the evil day, and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? To-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant."

But mark the end of these men and their mirth. The frothy tide of godless gaiety, on which they were for a time uplifted, retires, and leaves them stranded in dejection. To restore their vivacity they have recourse to the cup of intemperance, but as soon as the short-lived excitement passes off, they are plunged in still deeper wretchedness. Or again—contemplate them at the approach of danger. Ah! these are the times to test our principles: but how have your infidels trembled then! Or, look at the irreligious in the decline of life, when his animal spirits fail, and the friends of his youth, like passengers leaving a vehicle as it proceeds on its journey, drop away one by one, and leave him to finish the wearisome stage alone. O! how pitiable his situation! This world withering from his view, and no good prospect cheering him in the

Digitized by Google

next. As he lived, he generally dies—Christless and hopeless: a shattered, miserable wreck!

And yet, this is the boasted pleasantness of a life of irreligion! Now consider this, ye that forget God! "Rejoice, oh young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; walk in the ways of thine heart, and pursue whatever thine eyes desire; yet know, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away impurity from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."*

But to proceed; the city under consideration is a populous and *flourishing* city. Originally it contained but two inhabitants—our first parents: but it has increased with the "increase of God;" and now it incloses a great multitude whom no man can number, out of every language, and nation, and tongue, and people. And so it must continue to flourish till the consummation of all things; the Lord adding to his church daily such as shall be saved. "Christ must increase." "The stone cut out without hands must become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth." Amen.

* Eccl. xi. 9, 10. BOOTHROYD'S Translation.

Digitized by Google

5. Lastly. This shall be an "*eternal* city." All others, however vast or strong, eventually come to desolation. Witness Nineveh and Babylon; Thebes, Balbec, and Palmyra; the Tadmor of Solomon; whose magnificent ruins, strewing the wilderness with wonders, strike the beholder with astonishment after the expiration of thousands of years. Witness ancient Jerusalem, with her splendid temple and towers of marble, the glory and admiration of the world:—where are they all? Swept with the besom of destruction: so that, of some the very situation is uncertain. They were built by man; and therefore, stupendous though they were, perish like their builder; but the city whereof we speak is spiritual; formed by the great Architect of creation, and thus partakes of his own eternity.

O ye deluded enemies of God and his church, how vain, how impotent are all your machinations! "Associate yourselves, and ye shall be broken to pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken to pieces: take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us."

In contending against Him, ye only wound yourselves. Ye but bring upon yourselves swift destruction. The shafts, ye shoot against Zion, shall recoil and bury their poisoned barbs in your own bosoms. No weapon formed against her shall prosper. "The Church shall survive the world."

II. Let me then earnestly exhort you all to become

Digitized by Google

denizens of this wondrous city. Consider the privileges of its people. To them "there is no condemnation," they being in Christ Jesus.* The King of Zion is their special Friend. Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for them. They are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our GOD. They are preserved from their enemies; kept by the power of God, (kept as in a garrison town, for so the original imports,) through faith unto salvation.† Christ is both a wall of fire around them, and the glory in the midst of them; a shield to defend, and a sun to cheer them. They walk in the light of his countenance and enjoy the high privilege of immediate communion with GOD. O! it is desirable indeed to be citizens of such a city.—Then ye that are not so; but yet of the world, yet in the city of destruction, exposed to the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, hasten, hasten, by turning to the Saviour, to enter this city of refuge.

It is the only sanctuary. There is no safety, no peace, no genuine enjoyment beyond its hallowed precincts. All without is as the land of Sodom, lying under the frown and curse of the Eternal, and ready to be burned. The Church of Rome reasons correctly, but from wrong premises. She misapplies a true principle. In maintaining that there is no

* Rom. viii. 1. † 1 Pet. i. 5.

Digitized by Google

salvation out of the Catholic church she is perfectly correct; but, in asserting herself to be that Catholic church, she is most indisputably wrong. She is asserting what is a libel upon GOD. And so, to assert that out of any other christian denomination—not that I would place any on a parallel with Rome—there is no salvation, were similar arrogance and presumption. I am far from being insensible to the peculiar advantages of the Church of England, in her strictly apostolic constitution; and her eminently scriptural liturgy. Indeed, I consider that there are few, if any, equal to her. I consider those who leave her as absolutely inexcusable, and most solemnly responsible. I consider her children favoured of God in no ordinary degree, especially at present. But, while such are my sentiments, God forbid I should confine salvation to her. That were the very spirit of popery. It is not belonging to this or that section of the church universal that will save us, or our not belonging to it that will damn us. Our salvation depends not upon our being members of the visible Zion, but of the invisible. We must carefully discriminate between the two. The former is but the body of the latter: and the true Church, properly so called, may be in all orthodox communities. Out of any one we may be saved: but out of the inward and spiritual Church salvation is impossible: and why? The reason is evident—In that case we are separated from Christ, Christ and his Church being one.

Digitized by Google

Let me then conjure all such, as are alienated from the life of God, to flee forthwith to this only sanctuary. O! do not go on, Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, neglecting your grand concern; quenching God's Holy Spirit, hardening your own hearts, and treasuring up unto yourselves wrath against the awful day of wrath. Can you dwell with the devouring fire? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? O! bethink you. Tempt the Lord no longer. Provoke not Him, whose name is "Love;" who has given his own dear Son to die for you, and who consequently has no pleasure in your death, but in your salvation; provoke not Him to destroy you suddenly, and that without remedy. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall live. He will give you grace to believe, if you seek it with all your hearts. But remember, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "*Strive* then to enter in at the strait gate," lest ye be of that large number, who "shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Let those of you who through the divine mercy are already citizens of this city, be thankful and consistent. You are citizens of no mean city. You are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Live, then, as becometh your character; "having your citizenship in heaven."*

Those who are freemen of some considerable town

* πολίτευμα. Phil. iii. 20.

Digitized by Google

plume themselves not a little on that distinction; what an honour should *you* deem it to be freemen of the heavenly Jerusalem—"the city of the great King!" Are these things so? If they *are*, then, surely, we should consider them more: we should realize them, and live accordingly.

Let our conduct then declare to whom we belong.

Foreigners in any country are commonly distinguishable by their garb and language. So should the people of God be in this world. They should be as persons of another country. They should let it appear that they are "from above;" strangers and foreigners upon earth:—"an holy nation, a peculiar people." Their look, their language, their entire deportment, should be heavenly. O! may it be more and more so with us all!

Again; we should *seek the peace and prosperity* of our city. The church of God is described as a city compact together.* Alas! how hardly can she

* Psalm cxxii. 3.—"The ark (a type of the church) had the ribs, and planks, and parts thereof so closely fastened into one another, that no water might get in to drown it. And in the tabernacle, all the curtains thereof were to be 'coupled together' into one another. Exod. xxvi. 3. Christ is all for unity, and joining things into one: two natures united in one person, two parties reconciled by one Mediator, two people concorporated into one church, one Father, one Seed, one Head, one Spirit, one end and common salvation. 'Christ is not,' loves not to be 'divided.' This is a fundamental requisite unto the growth of the body, the preservation of its unity. The building must be 'fitly framed together,'

Digitized by Google

be recognized by this character at present! Never, perhaps, was there so little union in the christian church, and that, too, while the enemy is thundering at the gate! We resemble Jerusalem, invested with the legions of *Rome*, and torn to pieces by internal factions. "Without are fightings, and within are fears." What a shame! What a manifest device of Satan! What a cause for grief, for humiliation, for prayer! O! were we united

if you would have it 'grow into a holy temple' to the Lord. Eph. ii. 21. Col. ii. 19. When there was most unity, there was greatest increase in the church; when they were 'all of one accord,' of 'one heart,' and 'one soul,' then the Lord 'added to the church daily such as should be saved.' Acts ii. 46, 47. Greatly, therefore, are the sad and dangerous divisions of these times to be lamented, when men tear asunder the unity of the church, and make secessions from the common body, and then one from another, to the infinite content and advantage of the common enemies of our religion, and hazard of it. It were a blessed thing if we were in a condition capable of the apostle's exhortation, to speak all the same thing, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, to be of one mind, and to live in peace. 1 Cor. i. 10. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. But if that cannot be attained unto, let us yet all learn the apostle's other lesson,—wherein we are otherwise minded, to depend upon God for revealing his will unto us, and 'whereunto we have attained, to walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing;'—to remember that every difference in opinion doth not, ought not, to dissipate or dissolve the unity of God's church. Even in Corinth, where the people were divided into several parties, yet they continued one church. 1 Cor. xi. 18."—Bishop REYNOLDS. See his Fifth Sermon on Hosea xiv. Sec. 18.

Digitized by Google

among ourselves, how might we defy, how might we laugh to scorn, all our assailants! Let us pray then for a spirit of unity and love. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love her." "Pray unto the Lord for her; for in her peace *we* shall have peace."*

Once more: imitate other citizens by seeking the enlargement of your city. There is in vital Christianity a kind of instinctive tendency to propagate itself. The woman of Samaria no sooner discovered the Messiah, than she ran and announced Him to the whole population. The disciples also, when they knew the Lord, went and brought their brethren to Him. The same, on a more extended scale, was the principle of the apostles. "That which we have seen, and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with

* In thus pleading for peace, however, impressed with a sense of its immense importance, I would not be understood as pressing it on wrong grounds. There is a peace purchased at the expense of principle: a unity of death, in which persons of the most opposing sentiments combine for a common desired end,—as Herod and Pontius Pilate did, for the destruction of the Saviour. Such peace, such unity, we hold in utter abhorrence. No: the wisdom which is from above is first *pure*, then peaceable. This is the peace we advocate—peace based upon purity: union founded on principle: friendship flowing from the common love of Christ. O! that it more abounded! O, that we were all "of the same mind IN THE LORD!"

Digitized by Google

his Son Jesus Christ." So, those who were scattered abroad at the persecution which arose about Stephen, "went every where preaching the word." This has been the uniform experience. If we ourselves have found the Saviour to be precious, we shall necessarily endeavour to commend Him to our fellows: to tell them of his goodness, power, and willingness to save: and it were well did we test our Christianity by this simple criterion. How are the children of light put to shame by the children of this world in zeal for the propagation of their principles! The emissaries of the prince of darkness compass sea and land to make one proselyte. Let not their exertions in a bad cause exceed ours in the best. Let it no longer be tauntingly asserted, that Protestantism has lost its expansive principle. Let us "be zealous and repent." Let us strain every nerve of effort and endeavour, and give God no rest, till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, and the boundaries of his city be commensurate with the boundaries of the world.*

* "This is the nature of grace, to manifest itself, and, by that means, to allure and gather others to its own quality. It is set forth in Scripture by the names of 'light,' which shines abroad; of 'ointment and perfume,' which cannot be hid; of 'leaven and salt,' which deriveth its own nature and relish upon a whole lump. Therefore the Holy Ghost was given in tongues, and a rushing wind; all which have a quality of self-manifestation, and notifying themselves unto others."—Bishop REYNOLDS.

Digitized by Google

Finally: let the children of Zion, while they strive to walk worthy of their high calling and destiny, "be joyful in their King." Happen what may, it shall be well with them. The ancient enemy of the Church may discharge from his mouth whole floods of heresy and persecution. The kingdoms may be moved; the very world itself may be turned upside down; yet still shall the city of GOD, based upon her everlasting Rock, shine triumphantly above the billows, and be in bliss, though the universe were in ruins.

Yes, citizens of Zion! the wall of your city is indeed builded in troublous times; but let not your hearts be troubled. "Have faith in GOD." Stay yourselves upon your omnipotent and ever watchful Saviour, who is made the head over all things to his *church*. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice:" for, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." "Rejoice in Him evermore;" and that you *may* do so, "pray without ceasing." Prayer will bring down into your hearts still new streams of that heavenly river which gladdens the city of GOD. "Cry out, then, and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

Digitized by Google

No. IX.

HER BRIDEGROOM'S SUDDEN COMING.

REV. XVI. 15.

"Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

WHOEVER has perused with any tolerable degree of attention the Scriptures of the Old Testament particularly, will have been struck with the frequent recurrence in them of the remarkable phrase, "the day of the LORD." Much of the ambiguity that exists on prophetical subjects would probably be dissipated, were this period not confounded with the great day of "eternal judgment." That the Saviour will personally appear, sooner or later, is indisputable. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." On this point, therefore, Christians are agreed. But, a thousand years *prior* to this period there will occur an epoch of a somewhat similar character—a kind of prefiguration of it; and the one, accordingly, is sometimes blended with the other, in the prophetic

Digitized by Google

pages. To use the expressive language of Lord Bacon, "Prophecy has a growing accomplishment." God fulfils his word by instalments. Of the reiterated prediction of Christ's coming, the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth was one instalment; the downfal of paganism in the time of Constantine may perhaps be regarded as a second;* the Reformation as a third; the approaching day of the Lord, when He shall come out of his place to visit the kingdoms of the earth with national judgments, and establish his kingdom, as a fourth; while, greatest of all, the crowning catastrophe of the LAST DAY, when the mystery of God shall be finished, will form the full completion. Thus, the fulfilment of prophecy resembles concentric circles spreading over a sheet of water; first one, then a second, then a third, each perfect in itself, but ever succeeded by a still more ample; till the widening undulation eventually embraces the entire expanse.

It is to the *pre*-millennial advent of Christ that I now desire to direct your attention; *that* being the period apparently referred to in the text. The treatment of this subject will lead us to the consideration of several highly important passages of holy Writ, which perhaps are not always sufficiently understood by us. May the Spirit of Truth keep us from error, guide us into all truth, and bless to our immortal souls our meditations on the following momentous particulars:—

* Rev. vi. 12—17.

Digitized by Google

I. The necessity for Christ's coming.
II. Its nature.
III. The signs or indications of it; and,
IV. The proper preparation for it.

We consider,

I. The NECESSITY for this event.

1. Christ then must come to put a period to human guilt and human woe. Whatever amendment may take place among those who fear God—however large a number may be taken out of the general mass of mankind as "a people to his name," we are not to consider that the gospel will go on, prospering more and more continually, till, by an uninterrupted series of progressive conversions, it ultimately overflow the world. On the contrary, the stream of vital godliness, like a river running under ground, will seem for a season lost: so that the Saviour says, "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?"

"The wicked will do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand." "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." "They will revolt more and more." "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold." Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. Ungodliness, infidelity, and corruption in all departments shall prevail exceedingly: as, alas! they seem doing already; while

Digitized by Google

Jehovah's people will probably have their faith tried to the very uttermost. The worldly, for rejecting the Gospel, shall be given over to a reprobate mind, and become judicially hardened. Deprived of even the ordinary restraints of God's Holy Spirit, they will come under the absolute dominion of the spirit of evil. And accordingly, we are forewarned that, "in the last days," (and we are evidently living in them,) "perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves; covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents"—a notable feature of the age—"unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."* We are told that a time of temptation is coming on all the earth, a time of trouble such as the world never before witnessed, and that "many shall be tried, and purified, and made white."† Obviously it is expedient then, that the Saviour come to put a period to human wickedness; to liberate humanity from her tortures, to assert his own cause, and extricate his people out of their distresses.

2. Again; it is necessary that He come to destroy that pest of the earth—"the Man of sin." "That wicked," we are accordingly informed,

* 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. † Dan. xii. 1, 10.

Digitized by Google

"the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming."* By means of the word of truth wielded by the Spirit of truth, Popery, as a *religious* system, is at present in a deep and steady decline, both in Ireland and on the continent. Still it may, and probably will, continue to flourish for a time as a *political* system, even as a person may appear for a while robust and vigorous, though a deadly disease is secretly undermining his constitution. It is destined, however, to receive its annihilating blow at the brightness of the Saviour's coming.

This most desirable event is accordingly predicted in immediate connection with our text, which forms a parenthesis in the general description of that very consummation:—"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain:"—(19th verse)—"and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." Babylon, here, must necessarily be understood spiritually; the literal Babylon having long before ceased to exist: and all Protestants agree in considering the name to denote the papal system; it being the notorious persecutor and oppressor of Jehovah's people, under the Gospel dispensation, as Assyria had been in ancient times.

* 2 Thess. ii. 8.

Digitized by Google

3. Once more, He must come to REIGN. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper," &c.* How exhilarating the prospect presented to us in the perspective glass of prophecy! A glorious change is at hand. Affairs shall undergo a total translocation. Religion will no longer be the tiny, struggling, limited principle that it is at present. The ascendency of sin and error must give way to the ascendency of righteousness and truth. The creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. The Hearer of prayer shall answer at length the entreaty that has ascended to Him for so many long ages from his waiting Church, and which his own dear Son has put into her mouth, "Thy kingdom come." He will set up a kingdom in the earth that shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms.† He will perform his covenant to his chosen One, in giving Him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.‡ The kingdoms of this world are to be transferred from the usurper to the true and rightful Heir, even the Lord and his Christ;§ to Him, who hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name

* Jer. xxiii. 5. † Dan. ii. 44. ‡ Psalm ii. 8.
§ Rev. xi. 15.

Digitized by Google

written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.* He will come, whose right they are. He is preparing to descend in the plenitude of his majesty and power, to clear the territory of earth of its present obstructions and abominations, to depose and cast out the present prince and god of this world, and to replenish the vacuity so created, with the state and circumstance and richness and magnificence of his own celestial sovereignty. His kingdom shall be a righteous kingdom;† a peaceful and joyous kingdom;‡ a universal and everlasting kingdom.§ And, to establish it and take possession of it, must He come.‖

4. In fine, the Saviour must come, to fulfil his

* Rev. xix. 16. † Isaiah xxxii. 1.
‡ Psalm lxxii. 7. Rom. xiv. 17. § Zech. xiv. 9. Dan. vii. 27.
‖ Ezek. xxi. 27.

" 'There is no judging of the works of God before they are finished.' There is a time when the daughters of Sion *embrace the dunghill and sit desolate in the streets*, as Jeremiah hath it in his Lamentations; and at that same time the voice of Babylon is, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.* All is out of order here. But if we stay awhile, we shall see Sion and Babylon appointed to change seats, by the great Master of the world: *Come down*, says He, *and sit in the dust, O daughter of Babylon*, Isa. xlvii. 1, and here to Sion, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* It is an entire catastrophe; both parties find a notable alteration together. The same hand that exalts the one ruins the other."—Archbishop LEIGHTON's Sermon on Isaiah lx. 1.

Digitized by Google

numerous express *promises* to that effect: of which the text is one: "Behold, I come as a thief."

Let us now consider,

II. The NATURE OR CHARACTER of his coming.

It will be *sudden* and *unexpected*:—"as a thief in the night." It will take a careless and godless world by surprise: "For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."*

Therefore, it will be very terrible to the *Lord's enemies*. The divine declarations to this effect are numberless: hear Isaiah upon the subject: "Howl ye, for the day of the LORD is at hand. It shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt, and they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them: they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another, their faces shall be as flames: behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their

* 1 Thess. v. 3.

Digitized by Google

evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger."*

How awful are such descriptions! how unspeakably terrible will the day of the LORD be to all who were not on the Lord's side; to all who lived to the world, and despised a Saviour: to all, who, while they paid religion an outward ceremonious respect, gave their hearts unto riches, or swam with the stream of fashion, or were enslaved by habits of intemperance or vice. How terrible to all false teachers of religion; blind leaders of the blind: who hated the light because their deeds were evil; or who made godliness a cloak for avarice: to all such designing persons as, by their impious or inflammatory writings or harangues, exasperated the evil passions of their fellow-men, and set whole kingdoms in a ferment. How terrible to those *Protestants*, who, in glaring contradiction to their professed creed, aided the antagonist powers in their attempts to overturn it: to those also in influential stations, who did not throw the weight of their influence and authority into the scale of piety, nor openly confessed the Saviour before the world. In a word, how terrible to all,

* Isaiah xiii. 6—13.

Digitized by Google

whether high or low, who willingly absented themselves from the preaching of the gospel; or who, while they attended to hear it, laid it not to heart, nor departed from iniquity, nor timely embraced the proffered salvation.

The Redeemer's coming will be heralded by dreadful *wars*. So we read in the second chapter of the prophet Joel. "For, behold, in those days and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat." "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up: beat your plough-shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about; thither cause the mighty ones to come down, O LORD."—There are various similar passages in the Scriptures, apparently referring to the same period: of which kind, perhaps, is that injunction of our Lord in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew: "and when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." And so, it is remarkable, that in the very two verses im-

Digitized by Google

mediately preceding our text, we have the following solemn intimation: "and I saw three unclean spirits like frogs" (that is, noisy, and filthy, and covering the earth, as those pestilent creatures did Egypt in the time of Moses,) "come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty." Here comes in the text: "behold, I come as a thief," &c., and then follows—"and He gathered them;"—(that is, God Almighty by his overruling providence gathered them, "the kings of the earth and of the whole world,") "into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon:" probably in reference to Megiddo, a place memorable for slaughter.*—What tremendous

* See Judges v. 19. 2 Kings ix. 27. 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.

"The great battle of Armageddon will probably be a succession of many battles, which will terminate in the overthrow of all antichristian powers. Agents will be employed every where by these enemies to gather their armies together against that great day, or period of time. One evil spirit, or false principle, will proceed from the mouth of the dragon, the devil; one from the antichristian secular empire; and one from the false prophet, the papal church. With these false doctrines the emissaries of these three powers will go forth to deceive the nations, and gather them to the battle of God Almighty, where they shall fall to rise no more."—Rev. THOS. JONES on the Revelation.

Digitized by Google

wars are here announced: and who will say, that the vast armaments and other warlike preparations now in progress among the nations are not destined for such a mighty and universal conflict as is here notified?

Again: Immanuel's coming will be attended by great and terrible convulsions; to the utter annihilation of all anti-christian powers. This, also, is clear matter of prophecy. Let me refer you to two passages out of many; one from Isaiah, and the other from the very chapter under consideration: "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly, the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it: and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."*—This last verse indissolubly connects the preceding events with the coming of the Lord to reign in his millen-

* Isaiah xxiv. 19—23.

Digitized by Google

nial kingdom. The foregoing passage is from the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah; the *thirty-fourth* is also eminently deserving of attention, in connection with our subject. Now turn we to the chapter of the Revelation in which our text occurs, and we shall observe a notable resemblance between the two prophecies; immediately after the passage thence already cited, it proceeds—"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air: and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, and from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God,—and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found."

Thus "the blessed and only Potentate," is about to appear to convince all, both in high places, and in low places, both rulers and ruled, who refuse to have Him to rule over them, and who cast away his cords from them, saying, "who is Lord over us?"—of their folly and their criminality; of all their ungodly deeds, and of all their hard speeches; which they have blasphemously spoken against Him.

He will let them see their terrible mistake. He will overturn them, and rule them with a rod of iron. He will strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

Digitized by Google

He will judge among the heathen, and fill the places with the dead bodies: He shall wound the heads over many countries. — He will vindicate and assert his own rights and royalties, as "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" recompense all iniquity; destroy every adversary, and "take to himself his own great power, and reign."*

Now, amidst these awful convulsions *God's faithful people will be delivered.* In fact, that awful era will be "the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion:" recompense to her enemies, and of the preservation of God's children. Of this the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, abound with assurances. Let me select one or two texts, however, from the prophets. Jeremiah, apparently contemplating this very period, thus delivers the mind of the Spirit.† "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." So likewise it is written in Isaiah:—"And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the *great goodness towards the house of Israel*, which He hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. For He said, surely

* Psalm cx. 5, 6. Rev. xi. 17. † Chap. xxx. 7.

Digitized by Google

they are my people, children that will not be: *so He was their Saviour?*"* Take one example more from the prophet Joel:† "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope"—(or, as the margin has it, "the place of repair, or harbour") "*of his people*, and the strength of the children of Israel."

Yes; the time of vengeance for the controversy of Zion will be the year of Christ's redeemed,—the time of their salvation. So it has always been. When, for example, Pharaoh and his armies were drowned in the Red Sea, Israel was signally saved. When the citizens of Jericho were slain by the troops of Joshua, according to the divine command, Rahab the believer was rescued. When the idolaters of Jerusalem were appointed unto death, as described in Ezekiel's vision, Jehovah's faithful ones, on whom was set his mark, were exempted from the general slaughter. When Jerusalem was finally taken and destroyed by Titus, and its infatuated

* Chap. lxiii. 6—8. † Chap. iii. 13—16.

Digitized by Google

populace killed and crucified in thousands, the followers of Christ were mercifully preserved in their appointed hiding-places. In the seventh chapter of the Revelation, when God is represented as about to visit the earth with desolating judgments, the four angels, holding the four winds, are commanded to restrain their violence, till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads.

Accordingly, our blessed Redeemer, describing the indications of his coming, and the distress and perplexity, which would be then experienced by the world, charges his own people, saying, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." And so finally, in the text: "behold, I come as a thief; *blessed* is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." Such being the nature of the Saviour's coming, we are now to notice,

III. THE SIGNS OR PROGNOSTICS of it.

They are—1. *Novel opinions in religion:* "and then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there; believe it not, for false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce if it were possible even the elect: but take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things."*

* Mark xiii. 21—23.

Digitized by Google

2. *Abounding iniquity:* "and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."*

3. *Prevalent infidelity.* "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" &c. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?"†

4. *General worldliness and sensuality:* "but as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be: for as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.‡

5. *The universal promulgation of the Gospel.* "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."§ And again; lest any one should suppose that this declaration has reference only to the end of the *Mosaic* dispensation, let me adduce that other passage in the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation, and which, it is very remarkable, is introduced *immediately before* the announcement of the hour of God's judgment, and the downfal of Babylon: "and I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting

* Matt. xxiv. 12. † 2 Pet. iii. 3. Luke xviii. 8.
‡ Matt. xxiv. 37—39. § Matt. xxiv. 14.

Digitized by Google

gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."—Other signs of Messiah's advent might be mentioned, and it were easy to show that they all have a striking accomplishment at the present day: but I must hasten to the last point proposed for consideration, viz.

IV. The PREPARATION for his coming.

On this particular, we are instructed in the verses before us: "behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." It has been supposed that there is here an allusion to the following Jewish custom: "When the guards of the temple went their rounds at night, and found a Levite asleep on his watch, they set fire to his garments with the torches they carried," and in the fragments of them he might probably be compelled to appear on the following day, to his ignominy and disgrace.

The *first* requisite then is—that we be arrayed through faith in the garments of salvation. By nature we are naked, spiritually as well as corporeally. Our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and thus we are utterly unfit to appear before an infinitely pure and holy GOD. It is absolutely necessary, then, if we would escape his wrath, that, as occurred to Joshua the high-priest, these filthy garments be taken away, and we be clothed with change of

Digitized by Google

raiment.* In other words, that we put off sin and self-righteousness, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, who of God is made righteousness and sanctification to every one that believeth. His finished obedience, trusted in as the ground of our acceptance with the Father, renders us glorious in his eyes; and the graces of his Spirit, implanted in the soul, constitute our meetness for heaven and its joys.

Having on these garments of justification and sanctification, we must diligently "*keep*" them. Were we about to appear in the royal presence, we would be careful not only to be appropriately attired, but also to contract no stain in our way: so must he, who hopes to be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of God, both be arrayed as already described, and also "keep himself unspotted from the world."

Keeping our garments further implies, that we live as disengaged as possible from secular entanglements: that we restrain our affections from an inordinate adhesion even to the lawful things of this life: that we "weep, as if we wept not, and rejoice, as though we rejoiced not:" since the fashion of this world passeth away. As it is commanded again, "let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand."

Now, that we may be enabled thus to act, we should "*watch*." "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth

* See Zech. iii. 1—4.

Digitized by Google

his garments." We must watch against sin: especially the sin that doth most easily beset us—whether it be pride, or passion, or covetousness, or ill temper, or unbelief: we must watch against Satan and his assaults; who is ever watchful to surprise us: we must watch against the snares and fascinations of the world; lest that day come upon us unawares. In a word, we must "watch unto prayer."

Further: we should watch and observe passing events: as says the prophet—"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower."* Our Lord rebuked his disciples for their remissness in this particular: "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" And surely, if ever there was a period when attention to the admonition was of more importance than at another, it is the very period in which we live. The extensive manner in which the gospel is now preached, the growing and more decided separation in point of practice—(however short of what it should be)—between the Church and the world; the spread of popery, infidelity, and insubordination; the almost universal revolutionary spirit abroad; the portentous movements in the East; the gradual decay of the Mahomedan empire; the signs in the heavens—hurricanes, eclipses, inclemency of seasons; plagues, fevers, earthquakes, inundations, distress of nations,—all these phenomena concurring, —when squared with our Lord's predictions,—we must admit to be remarkable.

* Habakkuk ii. 1.

Digitized by Google

"The times that are *passing over* us," (said a late able writer,) "in the solemn phrase of Scripture, are eventful beyond all former example and conception. The awful catastrophes, the strange vicissitudes, the sudden revolutions of fortune, which, thinly scattered heretofore over a long tract of ages, poets and historians have collected, and exhibited to the terror and the commiseration of mankind, have crowded upon us with so strange a rapidity, and thickened so fast, that they have become perfectly familiar, and are almost numbered among ordinary events. Astonishment has exhausted itself, and, whatever occurs, we cease to be surprised."* Yet *ought* this to be the case? Should such occurrences pass over us, as storms across the heavens, and leave no abiding impression? Would not that be despising the divine admonitions? What does Isaiah complain of his countrymen? "LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." Jehovah's hand is now most visibly lifted up, and made bare in the sight of the nations; and criminal would we be in the extreme, were we not to acknowledge it, and humble ourselves under it.

To refer to such topics may not be agreeable; but would our neglect of impending calamities prevent them? No; but our attending to the intimations of them, may prove the means of our escaping them. "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."

* REV. ROBERT HALL.

Digitized by Google

Servants of Christ, watch and keep your garments. Occupy with your talents in your respective stations, so that ye may be accepted of Him as good and faithful, at his coming. Confess Him before men, that He may confess you before his Father and the holy angels.

And while you thus act, exercise a cheerful confidence in your God and King; for, come what may, He has said, "it shall be well with you."* "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Oh! how should we indeed rejoice in Him, who has shewn himself so signally loving to us; who hath not withheld his Son—his only Son—from us; but delivered Him up for us all: and all whose actions toward us are so eloquent of kindliness and affection. How, I say, ought we to rejoice in Him!

Let us see, then, that we do so. The times are unquestionably most eventful;—perhaps the most so that ever were. Never was knowledge so universally circulated; never was the human intellect so awake; never was there such restless and incessant locomotion. Steam has nearly annihilated distance; and information is diffused with the freeness, and almost the rapidity, of the wind. "The mind has dragged its ancient anchors." Society has received a powerful and irrevocable impulse. It can no more be arrested in its progress than can the earth in its passage through space. Retarded or directed it may be, but

* Isaiah iii. 10.

Digitized by Google

move onward it must. Before this mighty movement all corrupt systems totter to their fall. Superstition hears its rolling thunders, and trembles in her shrines. All the workers of iniquity are smitten with dismay. There is a general shaking, portending a general revolution. The present platform of things is rapidly passing away, to give place to one incomparably more desirable.

But, children of God, be not ye troubled in mind. Why *should* ye be? Your Saviour is in all these movements. They are but the dusty cloud raised by his advancing chariot. They are but the vernal storms that prelude the near millennial summer. The almighty Husbandman is proceeding to break up the fallow-ground of human society; to destroy the briers, and to plough the moral field with the ploughshare of convulsion, preparatory to that universal sowing of the gospel seed, which is to fill the world with the fruits of righteousness.

Who would wish it otherwise? Who so perverted in heart and mind as to desire a perpetuation of the existing order of things? to see God dishonoured, error dominant, iniquity triumphant; and human nature crushed to the very heart with suffering and oppression? Surely the hope of the Saviour coming to disenthral the world from its present bondage, and to bring it a time of refreshing, is with reason denominated in Scripture a "blessed hope."* Surely, we may well cry out, "Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

* Titus ii. 13.

Digitized by Google

When He cometh, there will no longer be the hypocrite and the formalist mingling with the true worshipper in the religious assembly: there will be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of Hosts. Error and superstition, perfidy and imposture, villany and corruption, shall be all banished to that pit of darkness whence they emanated. No longer will persons provoke and insult their Maker by swearing, rioting, lying, and Sabbath-breaking. No longer will the word of the living Jehovah be excluded for any portion of time from systems of national education: no longer will piety be considered a poor and despicable thing: no longer will its subjects be derided; its precepts trampled on, and its ministers impoverished and reviled. No: there will be a total reversion of matters. Every thing will be placed in its proper position. The wicked shall be no more. The righteous shall be exalted; "and the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."*

The believer is even now enabled to anticipate these things in some degree. Ascending the mount of prophecy, with the telescope of faith, he can "look forward over the gloomy foreground into the golden distances, and see the dawn of jubilee fringing with rosy edges the clouds of the present scene

* Daniel vii. 27.

Digitized by Google

of things." He beholds God's ancient and still beloved people restored to their own land, converted to Christ, and then going forth and proclaiming to all the world that precious faith, which their progenitors destroyed. He beholds them made of God "the life of the world." He beholds the living waters again gushing from mount Zion, and diffusing beauty and fertility over the moral wilderness. In a word, he sees sin put down; truth flourishing; virtue victorious, and universal holiness and happiness attending the establishment of Immanuel's kingdom in this fallen world.

Rejoice, then, ye righteous, in your prospects. Like your father Abraham, rejoice to see the Saviour's day. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein:—for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Amen.

Digitized by Google

No. X.

HER SAFEGUARD.

EPHESIANS VI. 14.

"Having your loins girt about with truth."

PROVERBS XXIII. 23.

"Buy the Truth, and sell it not."

WHAT is truth? The question was put by Pilate to Him who best could have answered it, for Christ himself is the "TRUTH;" but the Roman governor, not being in earnest, tarried not for a reply. May we abhor such awful trifling, and be truly serious in this most solemn of all investigations.

In the first place, let us mark the emphasis of the expression, "*the* truth." Truth can be only *one*, consequently there cannot, as some erroneously affirm, be *several* ways of salvation. "Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

I. By the term "truth" in the text, however, I would understand more particularly a sound system of religious doctrine. Let me specify a few of those grand articles which are essential to constitute such a system.

Digitized by Google

First, then, there is but one GOD. This fact even pure reason alone might teach us; for He who is GOD must be unapproachably superior to all other beings, and admit of no rival. Accordingly, He says in his holy volume: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy God is one LORD," "Thou shalt have no other gods besides me!" "Is there a god besides me? I know not any."—Yet, in this unity of the Godhead —in this oneness of Essence—there is a Trinity of Persons. This is a great mystery, which we do not pretend to explicate. We simply take the fact as it stands revealed in the pages of the Bible; because we believe the Bible to be the book of GOD. It was to have been anticipated, that a revelation coming from *Him*, would contain many things transcending our finite and feeble comprehension. That this is actually the character of the Scriptures is, therefore, an argument of their authenticity. He, who refused to believe any thing which he could not perfectly comprehend, would, did he follow out his principle, eventually be landed in universal scepticism. There exist mysteries in nature similar to what exist in Scripture; showing that both have one Author: so that the self-same objection, which would lie against the latter on this account, would lie no less against the former.

But where, it may be asked, do we find the word *person* in Scripture, as applied to Deity? We answer, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is written of the SON, "Who,

Digitized by Google

being the brightness of his (the FATHER's) glory, and the express image of his person," &c. This establishes the personality of the FATHER. That of the SON, it is presumed, few will question; He having appeared on earth as a person, and performed so many marvellous works. "The Word was GOD—and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "GOD was manifest in the flesh."* It is apt to be a difficulty with young inquirers after the truth, how to harmonize the apparently contradictory testimonies of Scripture respecting Christ; they representing Him sometimes as GOD, and at other times as man—sometimes as equal to the FATHER, and at other times as inferior to Him. The difficulty is removed by the recollection, that Christ was *both* God and man; David's Lord, and David's Son; "Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood." This is the only principle of interpretation that can possibly reconcile Scripture with itself; and, therefore, (as GOD cannot speak contradictions) must be the true principle of interpretation. The personality of the Spirit is proved by such texts as these:—"Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood." "It

* See John i. 1, 14. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Digitized by Google

seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden."* The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."† "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."‡ In short, the doctrine is established by all those passages wherein the personal pronoun "*he*" is applied to the Spirit. For instance: "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, He shall testify of me."§ "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin," &c.‖ "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come."¶ In these few verses, to which we might add numerous others, the SPIRIT, or Holy Ghost, is described as coming, willing, searching all things, yea, the deep things of God; reproving, guiding, hearing, and speaking, and showing things to come. If these be not actions and attributes of a person, then we wish to be informed what are. And let it be observed, that the passages wherein such statements occur are not figurative or poetical passages, but simple, grave asseverations of CHRIST and his apostles.

* Acts xv. 28. xx. 28.
† 1 Cor. ii. 10.
‡ 1 Cor. xii. 11.
§ John xv. 26.
‖ John xvi. 8.
¶ John xvi. 13.

Digitized by Google

Again: if it be demanded, where find we mention of a *Trinity* of Persons in the Godhead? we reply, in such texts as the following: "But the *Comforter*, whom the *Father* will send in my name," (says *Christ* the Son,) "He shall teach you all things."* "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ: for through *Him* we both have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*."† "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."‡ "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."§ Such passages as these, if believed and studied, must, we think, convince any candid mind of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. ‖ It is, indeed, the very spinal marrow of all Scripture.

It must, not, however, remain with us a dry abstract speculation. We must not be content with simply assenting to it. The doctrine is purely a matter of *faith*, and, therefore, to be received more by the heart than by the head. "Thy words were found, and I did *eat* them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine *heart*," says the prophet Jeremiah. The true Christian "*tastes* that the Lord is gracious." He reposes in the

* John xiv. 26. † Eph. ii. 13—18. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.
§ 2 Cor. xii. 14. ‖ See Note 1.

Digitized by Google

mystery of the TRINITY with the fullest, the sweetest complacency of his affections. He considers each of the three adorable Persons as being equally indispensable to him; the FATHER, as giving us a Saviour in his SON, and as Lawgiver accepting us in Him; the SON, as giving himself for us; and the blessed SPIRIT, as revealing Him in us, convincing us of our need of Him; taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us; and so bringing home the Saviour's finished work to our souls, that we obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

For, again; the Scriptures assert, that we are all deeply fallen from the state wherein we were originally: that God made man upright, but we have sought out many inventions: have "destroyed ourselves," and "become guilty before God," and are all "by nature children of wrath, being children of disobedience."*

Again; we are taught, that though we had all thus "fallen by our iniquity," by rebelling against the Lord, and robbing Him of his glory, and insulting Him, yet He "so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life." We are instructed that this belief unites to CHRIST, and, consequently, confers a part and property in all that He did and endured on our behalf;

* Eph. ii. 1—3.

Digitized by Google

that, being the production of the Holy Spirit, (for "no man can sincerely say that Jesus is the Lord but by Him,")* it "purifies the heart," "overcometh the world"—whether its seductions or persecutions, its blandishments or its threatenings—and "worketh by love;" constraining the individual to walk before GOD in holiness and righteousness all his days, making continual progress toward that perfect sanctification, which constitutes the meetness for the heavenly inheritance.

Once more; as the final constituent of this system of truth, which space will admit of my adducing, we are apprised that the Lord Jesus Christ, who came once in humiliation, and was accordingly despised and rejected of men, shall come again in his glorious majesty—the Father, in consequence of his having humbled himself, highly exalting Him, and giving Him authority to execute judgment also—that He shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and obey not his Gospel; that before Him shall be gathered all nations, and all individuals (for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the things done in the body); and that every one shall receive "according to that he hath done, whether good or bad;"† "the wicked shall go away into

* 1 Cor. xii. 3. † 2 Cor. v. 10.

Digitized by Google

everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."* This system of doctrine, extracted from the inspired oracles, and enshrined in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of our own apostolical church, is emphatically that "TRUTH," which we are commanded in our text—"to buy and not sell."

Here, then, let me pause to inquire, Have you, beloved reader, bought the truth? Have you been made sensible of your blindness, and wretchedness, and misery, by nature, and embraced Christ Jesus as the only Saviour—"the way, the truth, and the life?" "Is the truth of Christ in you?" Is "Christ in you the hope of glory?"† Can you say "My beloved is mine, and I am his?"‡ O, "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?"§

If you are conscious that you have not bought the truth, make no delay in buying it. Redeem the time: purchase the opportunity. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Those that seek me early," says Christ, "shall find me."‖ Do then as David did: "Make haste, and delay not to keep the commandment."¶ Remember the solemn saying, "Hell is truth seen too late."

* Matt. xxv. 46. † Col. i. 27. ‡ Cant. ii. 16.
§ 2 Cor. xiii. 15. ‖ Prov. viii. 17. ¶ Psalm cxix.

Digitized by Google

II. BUT WHAT IS IMPLIED BY "BUYING THE TRUTH?"

1. That we *value* it. We do not buy an article unless we appreciate and desire it. Naturally, however, we do not desire the truth "as it is in Jesus."* The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of GOD. Plants turn instinctively toward the light; but, alas! we do not turn instinctively toward spiritual light, but hate the light, because our deeds are evil, and it reproves them. We must, therefore, as an indispensable preliminary, "receive the *love* of the truth," as a special donative from above. We must then *search* for it, not triflingly, like Pilate; for GOD "scorneth the scorners:" nor with a double mind, like those reprehended by the apostle as "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." We must search for it with a zealous desire to find it. "Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom."*

But *where* shall we search? In the writings of man —in the volumes of human philosophy and literature—or the antiquated lucubrations of the fathers? Unquestionably, golden veins of truth are to be found in them, amid vasty masses of what, to use no stronger term, is unprofitable and valueless. But should we not at once have recourse to the rich mine?—to those precious records of which it has been rightly affirmed, that they "have God for their author, salvation for

* Prov. xviii. 1.

Digitized by Google

their end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for their matter."* Yes: "search the Scriptures," said the essential TRUTH, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." This is the field which contains the treasure: and this must be carefully penetrated. If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.†

2. Buying the truth supposes a *price* paid for it. For "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found

* LOCKE.

"—The question is NOT whether we should pull down one set of uninspired men, and set up another; but whether we should defer, with religious humility, to inspired men alone; receiving from others, of whatever age, just so much incidental aid as they may be severally qualified to render. When we say, therefore, 'not the Fathers, but the Reformers,' we do not intend to lift the latter upon the pedestal upon which the former have so unwisely been elevated; but we addict ourselves to the latter, rather than to the former, on this very account, and because they, to a great extent, have emancipated the church from its fatal thraldom to human authority, and have done more than had ever before been attempted or effected toward bringing the understandings and the hearts of men back from long and fatal wanderings, to an unfeigned and unexceptive submission to the WRITTEN WILL of God." —ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY. No. V.

† Prov. ii. 3—6.

Digitized by Google

one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." But how can a price be expected of *us* (who are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"), and for that, too, which is above all price? What can we part with in exchange for it? Simply, every prejudice and preconceived opinion, however endeared by long entertainment, or revered authority, if only it prove contrary to "the law and the testimony." We must call no man Rabbi. We must not listen to an angel from heaven speaking things contrary to the word of GOD. We must renounce self-righteousness, and the pride of human intellect, and the dogmas of unsanctified philosophy. We must become fools that we may be wise indeed;* "become as little children," "desiring the sincere milk of the word;" and that, not with the view of filling our understandings, but "that we may grow thereby." "God resisteth the proud"—resists them like an adversary—"but giveth grace to the humble;" and "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."† Mary's sitting at JESUS' feet, and hearing his word, is the proper posture for every disciple in the school of that heavenly Preceptor.

Buying the truth implies that, having found it, we abandon every false opinion for its sake. Truth is a jealous spouse. We must forsake all other and cleave only unto her. Thus did the great apostle Paul. Though he had attained to such

* 1 Cor. iii. 18. † Mark x. 15.

Digitized by Google

proficiency in the Jews' religion; though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, its most renowned doctor; though he had profited in it above many of his equals; though no man's temporal prospects in adhering to it could be brighter, nor any one's prejudices in its favour, and antipathy against the religion of JESUS, could be stronger—yet when divinely "shown a more excellent way"—even the way of salvation through faith in a crucified Redeemer—then, what things were gain to him, what things he piqued and prided himself upon, those he counted loss for CHRIST: "yea, doubtless," says he, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

3. Buying the truth supposes an *experimental* embracing of it. This constitutes the difference between wisdom and mere knowledge. Wisdom consists in being influenced by what we know to be right. Bare knowledge "puffeth up:" we must therefore seek "the charity which buildeth up." We must "grow *in grace* as well as in knowledge." We must pray that Christ may shine into our hearts: that the truth may *dwell* in us; "dwell in us richly in all *wisdom*"—that it may be, as it were, stereotyped in our souls. Every believer resembles the ancient ark of the testimony: his breast contains "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience;" like the incorruptible manna in the golden pot: a fruit-bearing faith, like Aaron's rod that budded; and the law of the Lord, the precious testimony, graven on the tables of his

Digitized by Google

heart, by the finger of GOD; the whole overshadowed by the waving wings of the ministering angel.

It is not enough to have Christ in our creed, or in our Bibles, or in our mouths; we must have Him in our hearts. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The Apostle's prayer for his Ephesians should be that of every individual for himself—"that Christ may dwell in his heart by faith."*

III. Having thus bought the truth, WE MUST NOT SELL IT, must not repent of our purchase. The world will tempt us to part with it for favour or popularity, or for pleasure, or for preferment. It will allure, and it will threaten. But we must set our faces as a flint as well against its menaces as its allurements; its ignominy as its honour; its frowns as its fascinations. We must not sell the truth for any consideration whatever. We must even "resist unto blood," relinquish life itself, rather than be guilty of so great a transgression. In fact, what would our selling the truth be, but selling our birthright for a mess of pottage?—but selling our own souls to the devil? For the word of truth is "the word of life"—"the word of salvation." "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "God will have all men to be saved;" how? "in coming to the knowledge of the truth."†

Accordingly, what reiterated admonitions have we

* Eph. iii. 17. † 1 Tim. ii. 4.

Digitized by Google

on this subject in Scripture:—"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine *heart;* so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."* "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."† "Continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard."‡ "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines;" "but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come."§ Indeed, what would we find in all the universe to compensate for the loss of the truth? "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Never were words like these more "words in season" than at present. Many false prophets are gone forth into the world. The time is come, foretold by St. Paul, "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they turn away their ears from *the truth*, and are turned unto fables." Divers and strange doctrines are abroad. Scarcely a day passes, wherein some new and extravagant notion is not propounded. The human mind seems run wild: no opinion is too extravagant—too palpably in the teeth of the very plainest statements of Inspiration, not to be broached and embraced: such is the Athenian spirit of the age; such the inordinate passion for novelties. Old

* Prov. iii. 1—4.
† 1 Thess. v. 21.
‡ Col. i. 23.
§ Rev. ii. 25.

Digitized by Google

and exploded errors, too, are raised from their dead sleep, like corses from the bottom of the sea, and sent floating in all their pestilent noisomeness over the surface of the christian world. Never, therefore, was it more necessary for persons who would keep the truth, to "try the spirits whether they are of God;" never was it more incumbent on them to "stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk therein."

But the heresy which should chiefly form the object of our jealous observation and most strenuous opposition, in these days, is doubtless "the Italian heresy."* This cruel, this anti-scriptural, this degrading, this soul-destroying system, though materially undermined in respect of its *spiritual* authority, especially in Ireland, appears to be receiving, at least, a *political* revival. The deadly wound, given to the Beast at the Reformation, and repeated at the French Revolution, is partly healed, and all the world wonders after the Beast.† The most vigorous, the most subtile, the most systematic and persevering exertions are made to re-establish Romanism in these Islands. In them she has taken up her most impregnable position; in them she seems concentrating her forces; determined to make them her last rallying-point, and place of most determined stand. Many circumstances, independent of external aids, conspire to assist her in carrying her accursed schemes into execution. First: there is the false *leniency* observed toward that sys-

* See Note II. † Rev. xiii. 3.

Digitized by Google

tem by many calling themselves *Protestants!* They have forgotten the character of Popery, as delineated in such tremendous colours by the pencil of Truth. They have forgotten that she is described as "that wicked one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."* They have forgotten that the Church of Rome is represented as "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters"—as "the woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy;" "and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH;" and as "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."† They have forgotten the terrific denunciation, that "if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and have no rest, day nor night, for ever and ever."‡ Again: others, who may not forget these awful sayings, allege that Popery is changed—meliorated by the advancement of the human mind. This, however, the Church of Rome herself constantly denies, maintaining that she is infallible, and therefore cannot change; as, indeed,

* 2 Thess. ii. 3—10. See Note III.

† Read Rev. xviii. throughout. ‡ Rev. xiv. 9—11.

Digitized by Google

her own accredited bodies of divinity—DENS, for example—put beyond controversy.‡

Again: the very *nature of her worship*, as has often been observed, greatly befriends its advancement, appealing, as it does, so powerfully to the senses (and we are sadly creatures of sense) with its superb vestments, delicious music, fragrant incense, exquisite painting and statuary, and splendid ritual.

Once more: the profound *ignorance* of the bulk of the population renders them but a too easy possession to zealous priests and insinuating jesuits; similarly as a vacuum in space invites the wind. Their minds, like the empty house swept and garnished, are open to the occupation of any unclean spirit who may please to enter in and dwell there.

But *the relief which Romanism affords to an uncomfortable conscience* is, doubtless, its most powerful recommendation. Every individual possesses a conscience. Now conscience will irresistibly impel him to embrace some religion which will yield him a present peace, and the hope of eventual salvation. At the same time, man being naturally wedded to sin, will, of course, prefer that religion which requires of him the least possible sacrifice. This will be the object of his secret preference, though circumstances may, for a time, prevent his openly adopting it. Now, Popery is precisely such a religion. It has "a form of godliness" without "the power;" substitutes penance for repentance;

‡ See Note III.

Digitized by Google

demands no change of heart—no genuine spirituality of mind—though several spiritual men have lived within its pale, divine grace enabling them to triumph over its errors:—it is contented with the mere observance of rites and ceremonies; and, for a certain pecuniary consideration, promises its dupes a plenary absolution from all their offences. These circumstances must ever give Popery a powerful advantage, as human nature is constituted.

For these and other reasons, then, which I shall not enumerate, this "damnable heresy" is likely to advance with lamentable celerity among the ignorant and ungodly; as, indeed, the word of GOD expressly declares. Speaking of "the Man of sin," in a passage already cited from, it says, "Whose coming is with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause GOD shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not *the truth*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

To testify these things, may be condemned as uncharitable; but, beloved Reader, we feel it our bounden duty to testify them unto you. Conscience will not suffer us to withhold them: we should feel that if we did, we had been most unfaithful to Him that sent us. He commands us to be "valiant for the truth," to "contend," and that "earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints." He denounces

* 2 Thess. ii. 10—12.

Digitized by Google

a "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter:" and the Scripture, after indicating the great apostacy referred to, as "forbidden to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats," immediately subjoins, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of JESUS CHRIST, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine."* Here, then, you perceive, we are imperatively directed to put our people in remembrance of these things, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. If we omit doing so, we are not good ministers of Jesus Christ. The charity of the Bible, you see, is widely different from that abominable counterfeit which passes current under the name in the world. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in THE TRUTH."

The "Lord God of truth" has been graciously pleased to intrust us with the invaluable deposit of a religion pure and undefiled. Let us then see that we part not with it; that we treasure it as the pearl of great price; that we keep it as the apple of our eye; that we guard it as the jewel of our church; the charter of our blessings; the very palladium of our national liberty and prosperity. "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times." Only while the truth dwells with us CHRIST dwells with us. When she departs, He departs;

* See 1 Tim. iv. 1—6.

Digitized by Google

and wo unto us when HE departs from us! Then would our glory be departed: then would ICHABOD be written upon us. It is a remarkable historic fact, that, according as the truth has been elevated or depressed by the nation, the country has prospered or declined. "Buy, then, the truth, and sell it not;" "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering."

But, HOW?

1. *By sedulously improving the means of grace.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD." "GOD manifests his word through preaching."* "It pleases GOD, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."† Therefore, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life." "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me," says Wisdom, "watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life," &c. "All they that hate me love death."‡ Alas! we have been too, too ungrateful for this mercy heretofore; may GOD give us grace to repent for the future, and to know the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hidden from our eyes! Let the rich and great, especially, as they would have glory to dwell in the land, evince their value for the truth, by continuing regularly to attend her ordinances, and so to set an

* Titus i. 3. † 1 Cor. i. 21. ‡ Prov. viii. 33—36.

Digitized by Google

influential example to all the other classes. "Them that honour GOD, He will honour; but they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed."

2. *By diligent private study of the Scriptures.* It was the neglecting of these for human compositions, that has uniformly been the cause of heresy and error. Thus it was with the Jews, and thus also it has been with the Romanists—they "have made the word of GOD of none effect through their traditions." "Their prophets have become wind, and the word is not in them."

The Bible is to the world of mind, what light is to the material world. In consequence of its withdrawment, darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. The nations were enshrouded in the night of ages. At length, about the commencement of the fifteenth century, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." A faint glimmering of scripural truth began to dawn here and there, till, at an early period in the following century, a German Monk, in the recesses of a convent, providentially lighted upon an old dusty Bible. As he proceeded in its perusal, light flashed upon his understanding. More especially, the grand doctrine of justification by faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST,* exclusive altogether of human merits—the doctrine which he himself subsequently styled "the article of a standing or falling church"—grew more and more

* Rom. v. 1, 2.

Digitized by Google

evident to his apprehension. As his acquaintance with Scripture increased, his attachment to his church (the church of Rome) proportionably diminished, till presently, roused to indignation by the barefaced and scandalous sale of indulgences for sins, which the Pope had at that time sent his emissaries into Germany to promulgate, this chosen champion of "the truth" plucked from the scabbard, in which it had so long rusted, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of GOD, and brandishing it with a vigorous arm and dauntless heart, bade defiance to the fulminations of the Vatican. Saxony, where LUTHER dwelt, being nigh the centre of Europe, was well adapted to be the focus whence the beams of evangelical light should radiate to the surrounding nations; thence they soon shot over to Britain. There likewise, about a century and a half anterior to this time, some glimmerings of the truth had been struggling with the gloom of Papal superstition. They existed among the people called Lollards, the most remarkable of whom was our English Luther—WYCLIFFE. That learned, pious, and illustrious pastor had published a variety of tracts on the points at issue between him and Rome; and, both by the pulpit and the press, was an eminent instrument in the hand of GOD in bringing round the blessed illumination that was approaching. He, moreover, succeeded in presenting to his countrymen a translation of the New Testament into the vernacular tongue. However, the people being then

Digitized by Google

sternly prohibited from reading the Scriptures, by the ruling powers, who were under the influence of the Papacy, the boon was comparatively of little value. To MYLES COVERDALE, afterwards Bishop of Exeter,* was reserved the distinguished honour of effectuating and publishing the first complete edition of the English Bible; the printing of which was finished at Zurich, in Switzerland, on the fourth day of October, 1535. That event, from the influence it had in rapidly extending "the knowledge of the truth," has fitly been fixed upon, and recently commemorated by thousands of rejoicing Christians in these realms, as the era of the British Reformation.

Learn, then, beloved Reader, that if you would retain the truth, you must hold fast the Bible. Its obscuration produced the moral night of "the dark ages," and its effulgence was the means of dissipating that darkness.

The question is occasionally asked, with an air of triumph, "Where was your religion before Luther?" Should this question be put to you, point to your Bible, and reply, "It was there!" Our religion was the ancient religion. The Reformation merely resuscitated the primitive doctrine. It restored the portrait, which the incrustations of error had defaced, and developed the immortal lineaments of Truth in renovated beauty. "The Bible, and the

* Appointed so by EDWARD VI.

Digitized by Google

Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants."* "Search, then, the Scriptures:" it is your privilege, your duty, your prerogative, your inalienable birth-right; to which you have fully as much title as to the atmosphere you breathe.† "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read." Search the Scriptures *daily*, like the noble Bereans; and while you do so, omit not to look up earnestly to CHRIST, for light to illuminate your mind. Only He, by whose inspiration all Scripture was given, can enable you to know his mind in it. The author of a book best understands his own meaning. Only the Intellectual Word can explain to you the written Word. He is our Prophet, to teach, as well as our Priest, to atone. "Who teacheth like Him?" Without this divine Instructor the Bible will be to us a "sealed book." Only the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.‡ As often, then, as you open the Sacred Volume, implore the Lord to open the eyes of your mind to understand what you read; then will you see "wondrous things" out of his law; then will your hearts, like those of the two disciples, burn within you, while He opens to you the Scriptures. Then will you be made wise unto salvation.

* CHILLINGWORTH.

† See Deut. vi. 6—9; Isaiah xxxiv. 16; viii. 20; John v. 39; Acts viii. 28—30; xvii. 11; Rev. i. 3.

‡ Rev. v. 5.

Digitized by Google

3. Hold fast the truth *in faith and love*. Such is the apostolic direction: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us."* First, Hold fast the truth in *faith*. Believe it—realize it. Let it not be a matter of mere mental entertainment—of mere intellectual speculation; but of substance and evidence. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Secondly, Hold it fast in *love*:—love to GOD, evidencing itself in love to man. If we hold not the truth in love, we shall never adorn, never recommend it; we shall be mere religious zealots; nay, by grieving God's Holy Spirit, through unholy affections, we may even come to lose it ourselves. Never forget that you are to love your neighbour, and do him good, of whatever religious persuasion. Protestantism does not consist in hating Romanists, as, unhappily, too many appear to imagine. Protestantism consists in hating Romish errors. It is but another name for genuine Christianity.† Hate their errors as much as you please, but oh, love—love their persons! "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of GOD."

* 2 Tim. i. 13, 14.

† The name Protestant was originally derived from the memorable "protest" entered by the leaders of the Reformation in Germany, against the decree of the second Diet of Spires, in 1529, prohibiting, under the influence of the Emperor Charles V., all further propagation of their principles.

Digitized by Google

"Love is the fulfilling of the law." Be not then "overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

4. *Walk in the truth.* We find the apostle John, in the compass of a very few verses, again and again expressing his joy, that those he wrote to thus walked. "I rejoiced," says he to the elect lady, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth." Again, in his epistle to Gaius, he says, "I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." However we may glory in the superiority of our religious advantages to those of the Romanists and others, never let us forget that we are no whit better than they, unless we *live up* to our superior light. Nay, in this case, we are incomparably worse, and our responsibility incomparably weightier. O let us take heed, lest our religious privileges prove after all the very worst circumstance in our situation! Recollect, you can never, never be exonerated from the solemn accountability in which they involve you. "If I had not come and spoken to them," said Christ, "they had not had sin (that is, none in comparison,) but now they have no cloak for their sin." "That servant who knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," says God to the Jews, "therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." The nearer we are exalted to heaven

Digitized by Google

by our spiritual opportunities, the deeper shall we be plunged into hell, if we improve them not; for to whom much is given, of them will the more be demanded.

Let us see to it, then, that we be Christians indeed: not "holding the truth in unrighteousness," but "holding it *forth* like a pharos, (so the allusion is,) "showing forth by our lives his praises, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." Boast not of your ecclesiastical privileges—say not, "The temple of the LORD are we;" for in Christ Jesus no outward advantages avail any thing, but "a new creature." "If any man have not the SPIRIT of Christ, he is none of his." Let our reformed faith have justice; let it be duly represented in our tempers and practice; let it have a living visible *incarnation* in them;—then, others, seeing our good works, shall be won to approve the truth, and shall glorify GOD in the day of their visitation.

Alas! how far from such consistency are the majority of persons! The professing church at present exhibits an awfully incongruous appearance. There are immense bodies of cold Antinomian Orthodoxy—spiritual icebergs—multitudes of persons having light without love; knowledge without holiness: and there is an immense mass, also, of imaginary knowledge, but real ignorance; a darkness not felt—accompanied with deplorable narrow-hearted bigotry, sectarian bitterness, and repulsive prejudice; and there is, moreover, an enormous

Digitized by Google

proportion of pure religious indifference, gross immorality, practical infidelity, baptized paganism! In short, what one form of vice and irreligion is not to be found profaning the sacred enclosure of Christendom? That which should be the best portion of the whole world is, taking into account its distinguished opportunities, the very worst. Millions "professing that they know God, in works deny Him; being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

Now, behold! the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; but most especially, his professing Church—those who call themselves Christians, but are not, being of the synagogue of Satan; those who have had the privilege of the truth, but have not profited by it; those who have taken Christ's name on their lips, but disgraced it by their lives, and caused it to be abhorred by the heathen. Such shall receive greater damnation. The day cometh that shall burn them up; leaving them neither root nor branch. And this great and terrible day of the LORD is near: "it is near, and hasteth greatly." "Behold!" says Christ, "I come quickly: I come as a thief in the night." "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem (the professing church) with candles, and punish the men that are settled upon their lees, that say in their hearts, The LORD will not do good, neither will He do evil." Alas! what a rueful surprise and awaking

Digitized by Google

from their madness awaits many! "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." Seeing, then, that we are to look for such things, I would address to all the unconverted, a word of most serious, solemn, and affectionate warning. I would beseech them to "flee from the wrath to come"—to flee unto JESUS, and take refuge under the canopy of his mediation. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Repent: break off your sins by righteousness: turn from worldliness unto CHRIST—"from the power of Satan unto GOD." Pray for new hearts. Get the life of religion, as well as the name: get the root of the matter, as well as the semblance: get the principle, as well as the profession; get oil in your vessels with your lamps. "Before the decree bring forth; before the day pass as the chaff; before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you—seek righteousness; seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger." "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God"—"at his sanctuary;" and if judgment begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Every individual, continuing in estrangement from

Digitized by Google

his Maker, resembles the comet now traversing our Northern hemisphere.* Instead of keeping steadily in his proper place, receiving illumination from the great Fountain of light, and reflecting it around him to the Divine glory, he is off his orbit; he has broken from his moorings; he is drifting wildly on the wastes of creation; marring, in place of beautifying, its fair aspect; a monster and a marvel in the eye of all good and sagacious intellects; a spiritual Cain; a moral outlaw! And though, like the erratic visitant adverted to, he may have his splendours—the splendours of genius or of station—and emit a momentary glare; and have his uses (for GOD serves himself of all his creatures); yet it is undesignedly, not purposely; and even the little light he does afford is dim and disastrous, and malignant in its influence, like the light of hell: and he carries a burning hell within him: he carries in him the principles and elements of his own destruction; so that, after glimmering for a few fleeting hours, or weeks, or months, in the night and dimness of this upper region, he disappears from the scene; his place knoweth him no more; he departs as he came;—"a wandering star, unto whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

5. Hold fast the truth by *unceasing prayer*;—prayer for "the Spirit of truth," that so you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Sa-

* 1835.

Digitized by Google

viour; the grand preventive against "being led away with the error of the wicked."* "For whosoever hath, (improves what he has) to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." The foolish virgins not having oil in their vessels, their lamps went out.

Pray, also, that others may be "given repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;" and that, having bought the truth, they may not sell it. Pray for the *church* of which you are a member, that she may be purified through the knowledge of the truth, and long hold forth in her candlestick a burning and shining light. Pray for your *rulers*, that they may maintain the truth, and be guided by it in all their proceedings; that so, "peace and happness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us to all generations." Pray that the *people of these realms*, having been favoured with the truth, may never part with it; but be a nation loving the truth, and "keeping the truth." Pray that the truth may go on prosperously unto universal dominion, demolishing every system of error, and every stronghold of Satan, as it will. Finally, pray for us *ministers of the gospel*, that we may speak the truth in love; "that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for all men have not faith;"† and that, after having

* See 2 Peter iii. 17, 18. † 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2.

Digitized by Google

preached to others, we ourselves may not be cast away.

6. And while you pray, lastly, *make every possible exertion to maintain and propagate the truth;* by teaching it (according to the command given in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy), to your children, your servants, your dependants, and to all the ignorant around you; by assisting at Sabbath-schools; and by subscribing, as GOD hath prospered you, to the support of all institutions which have for their object the extension of the Truth, whether at home or abroad. Let it be remembered, that we are all stewards, answerable to GOD, the great Proprietor, for the improvement of our talents to his glory.

Unless the more wealthy Protestants of this kingdom make sacrifices and exertions immensely surpassing all that they have heretofore made, (I speak generally, for some have been remarkably munificent) toward building churches, and maintaining faithful ministers in them; unless, in short, they out-work Popery, they cannot long, under present circumstances, retain their religious privileges, or even their holdings in the country. Protestantism, and with it all our blessings, will inevitably be driven from the land.

You have thus been told what the truth is, and how we are to buy and keep possession of it. It only remains that I endeavour to enumerate,

Digitized by Google

IV. THE ADVANTAGES ACCRUING FROM KEEPING THE TRUTH. These are highly important.—1. Keep the truth, and the truth will keep you. "Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee; love her, and she shall keep thee."* Truth is a girdle. "Having your loins girt about with truth."†

But from *what* will the truth keep you? (1.) From heresy and error. "Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the Scriptures?" said Christ to the Jews. Truth is destructive of error, as light is of darkness. (2.) From sin. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."‡ (3.) From *the pollutions of the world.* "They have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."§ (4.) From its *trials.* "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience," says Christ,‖ "I also will keep thee from THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION, WHICH SHALL COME UPON ALL THE WORLD, TO TRY THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH."—O! the preciousness of God's holy word! Strip me of every earthly comfort; shatter my reputation; deprive me of my friends; expel me from my country; place me upon an isolated rock amid the ocean; there let me lose my health, my hearing, my every bodily faculty, save my eye-sight: but O! spare me this and my

* Prov. iv. 6. † Eph. vi. 14. ‡ Psalm cxix. 9.
§ 2 Peter ii. 20. ‖ Rev. iii. 10.

Digitized by Google

Bible; and, with that incomparable Book, and the Divine SPIRIT, at whose dictation it was penned, for my Interpreter and Comforter; I shall have a light from heaven poured upon my darkness, I shall have a home in my exile, a blooming oasis amid surrounding desolation: I shall people my solitude with celestial visitants, and change into the gate of glory the very vestibule of despair. (5.) The truth will keep you *from the power of the wicked one.* "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And how resist him? Even as the Captain of our salvation did, by that two-edged sword bathed in heaven—"the Word of GOD." This weapon the spiritual adversary cannot withstand. The redeemed, mentioned in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation, "Overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the *word* of their testimony."

2. If you keep the truth, you shall retain the Divine favour. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."* "If a man love me," says CHRIST, "he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."†

3. You shall obtain answers to your prayers. GOD heareth not those who regard iniquity in their hearts. He will not be inquired of by them. But, "If you abide in me," says Christ, "and my words

* Prov. iii. 3, 4. † John xiv. 23.

Digitized by Google

abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

4. The truth shall make you free. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples, indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

But from what? (1.) From the narrow trammels of prejudice and superstition. Truth strengthens and dilates the intellect; gives elevated and extensive views of things. They who are called "free-thinkers," are most falsely so called. How could they be free? Their intellects are cramped, cabined, immured in a dungeon of darkness. "I am come a light into the world," says JESUS, "that *whosoever believeth in me* should not abide in darkness." Evidently, therefore, all others do abide in darkness: They resemble persons dwelling all their lives in mines, without ever mounting to the light of day. Divine knowledge is far above, out of their sight. They never ascend to what is spiritual and celestial. A weight is on the wings of their soul. Like the swallow, they do but skim the surface of the ground, catching flies. Whereas, the believer soars on wings, as an eagle; gazes on the Sun of Righteousness, and feasts upon the fruits of Paradise. "He is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

(2.) The truth frees from the enslaving dominion of sin. Men destitute of the truth are men of corrupt minds.† They are "in the bond of iniquity,

* John viii. 31, 32. † 1 Tim. vi. 5.

Digitized by Google

taken *captive* of the devil at his will." While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." But the truth emancipates from this miserable bondage, and translates into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. The reception of the truth into the heart, is the reception of CHRIST into it; for He is "the truth." Therefore, says he, in the verse succeeding that above cited, "If the SON shall make you free, then are ye free indeed." Yes—

> "He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves beside."

5. This reception of the truth *sanctifies*. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit." And we may add, that nothing else *can* sanctify. A dead faith cannot produce a living soul. Vital piety can spring from no other root than "the root of David"—the Tree of life. Persons of heterodox principles may be very moral, and amiable, and have even a "form of godliness," and, "*seem* to be religious," and often are exceedingly exemplary in all these respects; resting, as they do, so exclusively on them for salvation. But such persons are never *spiritual*; never have profound views of the heinousness of sin, of GOD'S purity, and their own pravity. All experience illustrates this. In fact, the case could not be other-

Digitized by Google

wise; for "the world cannot receive the SPIRIT,"* in his sanctifying operations. He is "given only to them that believe;" and the world are destitute of that *faith*, which, being the product of the Spirit in the heart, sanctifies it. Believers are "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and *belief of the truth*."† They are "built up, (that is, edified) on their most holy faith."‡ They are sanctified in CHRIST JESUS.§ CHRIST, then, is the only stock from which genuine evangelical piety can possibly germinate. "I am the vine," says He, "ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me (or severed from me, see margin) ye can do nothing." No, nothing truly good, spiritual, or acceptable to GOD. "HE THAT HATH THE SON, HATH LIFE; AND HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD, HATH NOT LIFE."‖

Again, the knowledge of the truth *justifies*. "By his knowledge (that is, by the knowledge they have of Him) shall my righteous servant (CHRIST) justify many."¶ Thus, then, we are, through the truth, emancipated both from the enslaving power of sin, and the condemning power of the Law. Glorious liberty! blessed freedom! O that we all may attain; and, having attained, may "stand fast" in that true freedom wherewith the truth beatifies its possessors!

* John xiv. 7. † 2 Thess. ii. 13. ‡ Jude 20.
§ 1 Cor. i. 2. ‖ 1 John v. 12. ¶ Isaiah liii.

Digitized by Google

6. If we keep the truth, *we shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.* "The wise shall inherit glory." "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in."* "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." "Blessed are they that do his commandments (and this is one—that we keep the truth), that they may have a right to the tree of life; and may enter in through the gates into the city."†

Such, then, being the momentous advantages of keeping the truth, see, my brethren, that ye "buy, and sell it not." Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time (wherein *we* live) who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."‡

To conclude: It is comfortable and cheering to know, as we do to a certainty, that though the powers of this world, and those of hell associated, may furiously rage together, and "cast down the truth to the ground, and practise, and prosper;"§

* Isaiah xxvi. 2. † Rev. xxii. 7—14. ‡ Jude xvii. 21.
§ See Dan. viii. 12.

Digitized by Google

yet that they must experience in the end a most signal defeat. Yes: "The triumphing of the wicked is short." They can, eventually, do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper. There is no power or counsel effectual against the LORD; his word *shall* have course, and be glorified; the mountains of opposition shall become plains; and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory, as the waters cover the bed of the sea.

TRUTH was originally paramount on earth. She reigned in the understanding and the affections of man. But, alas! he would be wiser than his Maker saw it good for him to be; and "the father of lies" in consequence succeeded in deposing Truth from her earthly throne. Thus hath she stood ever since, in the attitude of an exiled queen, seeking restoration to her rightful dominions. But who should restore her? GOD himself. He has undertaken her cause; for it is *his* cause. "O LORD! are not thine eyes upon the truth."* He hath said "Truth shall flourish out of the earth." The heathen shall be given to "his Son" for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. For thousands of years has He been fighting her battle: and every day and hour adding to her conquests. Her Champion is the Captain of salvation: her sword, the sword of the Spi-

* Jer. v. 3.

Digitized by Google

rit: her chariot, the everlasting gospel. Thus, though her victories have been many and splendid; though much territory has been regained; though her arrows have been sharp in the hearts of her enemies, so that the people fall under her—yet, unlike the battles of earthly warriors, wherever she prevails, all miseries are mitigated—all blessings are introduced. Who, then, would not wish her prosperity? Who would not pray, "Thy kingdom come!" Who would not desire that she may go on, conquering and to conquer? Who would not join in the acclamation of the Psalmist, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness?"*

Reader! the time is arrived, when all must choose their side; who, then, is upon the LORD'S side? Who will take part with Him against the evil-doers? Who will come to his help, to the help of the LORD against the mighty? Blessed are they; for they shall prosper; be made conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them. Amen. As for the enemies of Truth, and all that are neutral, they shall be covered with shame, and crushed beneath her victorious chariot-wheels. For what saith the apostle John? "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and He that sat upon him

* Psalm xlv. 3, 4.

Digitized by Google

was called Faithful and *True*, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

* Rev. xix. 11—16.

Digitized by Google

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE I.

To this doctrine the objection is continually urged, "How can three be one?" But surely this is frivolous and idle, having been so often fully refuted. We do not say, that three are one in the same respect. We say not that the three Divine Persons are one *person*. That were a contradiction in terms. What we say is, that there are three Divine Persons in one *nature*—in one *essence*—in one *Godhead*. And why should there not be? Who are we, to pronounce what may or may not subsist in the infinite nature of JEHOVAH? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"—We forget our position: we forget that, in comparison with the high GOD, we are worms: that He is in heaven, and we upon earth: that He is infinite, and we finite and fallen. Sooner may we measure the universe with our eye, grasp the globe with our hand, or receive into our mouth the congregated waters of the ocean, than comprehend the infinite nature of Deity with our limited capacities!

"Will men," says Bishop STILLINGFLEET, "never learn to distinguish between numbers and the nature of things? For three to be one is a contradiction in numbers; but whether

Digitized by Google

an infinite nature can communicate itself to three different subsistences without such a division as is among created beings, must not be determined by bare numbers, but by the absolute perfections of the Divine nature, which must be owned to be above our comprehension.

"For let us examine some of the perfections which are most clearly revealed, and we shall find this true. The Scripture plainly reveals that *God is from everlasting to everlasting; that He was, and is, and is to come;* but shall we not believe the truth of this till we are able to fathom the abyss of God's eternity? I am apt to think (and I have some thoughtful men concurring with me) that there is no greater difficulty in the conception of the Trinity and Incarnation, than there is of eternity. Here we have, therefore, a thing which must be owned by all; and yet such a thing which can be conceived by none; which shows the narrowness and shortness of our understandings, and how unfit they are to be the measures of the possibilities of things. *Vain men would be wise;* they would fain go to the very bottom of things, when, alas! they scarce understand the very surface of them. They will allow no mysteries in religion; and yet every thing is a mystery to them."*

It may be interesting to observe, as an external and accessory evidence of the truth of this doctrine, that traces of it have been found in almost all nations of the world, however distant from each other, and entirely distinct in other respects. For example, the Indians have their triad of deity, Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva. The Chaldaic theology acknowledged three principles; that of Persia inculcated the worship of the "Triplasios Mithra." The Japanese employed the numen *triplex* as an emblem of the Deity; and a medal has been found in the deserts of Siberia, with an inscription to the Triune God. This doctrine is prevalent in China also; for the people of that country believe in a supreme

* See BISHOP STILLINGFLEET on Scripture Mysteries.

Digitized by Google

God, the creator of all things, and two other governors of like nature, who bear rule with him, the one in the upper, and the other in the nether world (Histoire de la Chine, 1614, cap. ii. 27); and Purchas tells us, that, "when the Chinese arise in the morning they turn their faces to the East, and with their hands joined, say, God in trinity keep us in his law." (See Pilgrimes, lib. iv. cap. 16.) This belief prevails even in the New World, for the South Americans have their Tangatanga, or three-in-one divinity. (Maurice, Ind. Ant. Introd. p. 127.)—*From the Weekly Visitor of* 1834, *p.* 226.

The ancient *Jews* had several symbols of the Deity, as a *tree*, of which Rabbi Schabte says, "There are three degrees, the root, the stem, and the branches, and these three are one." They wrote the name of God symbolically, by including three Jods within a circle. The circle was the figure denoting perfection. The three Jods were the beginning letter of the word JEHOVAH, to denote the three persons in the Godhead. The equilateral triangle, with three small circles at the angles, and the letter Jod inscribed over against the upper angle, was another Jewish symbol of the Deity.

The names of the *Persian* Triad were, Ormusd, Mithr, and Ahriman; called by the Greeks, Oromasdes, Mithras, and Arimanius. Mithras was commonly styled Τριπλασιος. Among them, as well as among the Hindoos, the second person in the Triad was called the *Mediator*, and regarded as the great agent in the present world.

The names of the *Egyptian* Triad were anciently Osiris, Cneph, and Phtha, and afterwards Osiris, Isis, and Typhon.

In the Empires of *Thibet* and *Tangut*, a triune God is constantly acknowledged in the popular religion.

The ancient *Scandinavians* acknowledged, a Triad, whom they styled Oden, Frea, and Thor. The *Romans*, *Germans*, and *Gauls*, worshipped a Triad in various manners.

In *America*, the Iroquois hold, that before the creation

Digitized by Google

three Spirits existed, all of whom were employed in creating mankind.

The *Peruvians* adored a Triad, whom they styled the FATHER and the LORD Sun, the SON Sun and the BROTHER Sun. See Dr. DWIGHT'S Theology, Sermon LXXI, from which these testimonies are taken. In concluding the collection of them, that admirable writer, and erudite divine, makes this remark: "In a serious mind, it cannot, I think, fail to produce, not conviction only, but astonishment and delight, to see the wonderful manner in which God has diffused and perpetuated the evidence of this doctrine, throughout the successive periods of time."

NOTE II.

THAT Popery is spreading, and in an alarming degree, seems evidenced by the Papal schools, chapels, convents, colleges, and monasteries, which are every where erected; and is the opinion of clergymen of all Protestant churches of the United Empire, as expressed at the several Protestant meetings, recently convened.

The foregoing was penned about five years ago. Since then, the elevation and advancement of Popery is such as must strike with astonishment even the most careless observer. It may be relied on as a fact, for which the best authority could be given, that more money is transmitted from Rome for the purpose of advancing the views of the Vatican in this empire, than is transmitted for the same purpose to all the rest of the world. It is also avowed by her own adherents, that prayers are regularly offered up by the Romish church for the re-conversion of these islands to what she falsely designates "the ancient faith." All this is only

Digitized by Google

consistent. But what shall we say, when Popery is now patronized and endowed, unblushingly, both at home and abroad, by our nominally protestant nation! How distressing to see our fine colonies embarrassed, and the efforts of christian philanthropy crippled and frustrated, by the paralyzing influence of that uniformly blighting superstition. The kings of the earth, verifying prophecy, (howbeit they mean not so,) are indeed "giving their power and strength unto the Beast." Rev. xvii. 13. This is for a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation. But, that a nation so eminently favoured, since becoming protestant, as ours has been, ungratefully forgetting the secret of her strength and the origin of her greatness, should now be "chief in this trespass," is inexpressibly deplorable.

NOTE III.

DOCTOR DODDRIDGE relative to this passage (2 Thess. ii. 3—10.) observes: "The usurpation of the Papacy in divine things, is so unequalled, that if these words are not applicable to it, it is difficult to say who there ever was or can be, to whom they should belong."—Yes; it was to have been expected that a system, exercising an influence so mighty and protracted in the religious world as Popery has done, would be clearly delineated in the Holy Scriptures; where then shall we find such a delineation, save in those very passages which are generally applied to that system, and which, indeed, do depict it so remarkably?

NOTE IV.

THAT Dens' Theology is in point of fact the great authority and book of reference among the Irish Roman Catholic

Digitized by Google

Priesthood in general, has been proved by the Rev. Messrs. M'Ghee and O'Sullivan, and by the Rev. David O. Crolly (see the Postscript to his second pamphlet), with an evidence that must be conclusive to every honest mind. And that Popery is unchanged and unchangeable, is witnessed by the mouth and pen of its own ministers. We appeal to Dr. Murray's letter to the Protestants of Great Britain; wherein he says, "We Catholics believe that our church is infallible;" and to the following statement in the public prints, never, we believe, contradicted:

ENGLISH POPERY.—The Hon. and Rev. —— Spencer (brother of my Lord Althorp that was) has been appointed to a Catholic chapel in West Bromwich, Staffordshire. Soon after his appointment he called on all the Dissenting Ministers, stating that he had been named "by God" to the charge of the district; and questioning the said Dissenting Ministers as to their prejudices against the ancient church. Among others, he called on the Rev. Mr. Hudson, the respectable Minister of the Independents in that populous parish. During the interview, Mr. Hudson asked this new servant of the Pope, whether it was true that the Catholic Church had undergone any change in its doctrine since the olden time, when the convert distinctly denied that it had undergone any change whatever; and that it was its own especial and peculiar boast that "*it was a Church without schism and without change,*" this being the proof with the faithful that it was, *therefore the only true Church.* He offered, likewise, some arguments in defence of all that the church had done, sanctifying the *sword of State!*

Thus, then, we ask, in the spirited words of a living divine, "Hath Rome amended one article of her unscriptural creed? Hath she withdrawn one assertion of her fancied dominion over both worlds? Hath she abated one nuisance of her multiplied superstitions? Hath she reversed one anathema

Digitized by Google

against the holy cause of Protestantism? Nought—nought of all these things hath she done; and yet we must believe she hath improved with the spirit of the age. Nay—nay! Never was there one hour since the dawn of the blessed Reformation, when the original spirit of Protestantism more needed to be roused to vigilance and earnest contending against the dogmas and the doctrines of Rome. Her designs are ever the same—one universal empire over the minds and bodies of men. Her doctrines are ever the same—an unsightly and unstable structure of imaginary human merit and proud self-righteousness. This structure may, and will yet be overturned, but can never be amended; and they who talk of its improvement are but flattering others, and deceiving themselves."—*Rev.* HENRY COOKE, *D.D.*, *Belfast.*

Digitized by Google

No. XI.

HYMNS.

I.—"THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH."

Matt. xxv. 10.

1.

On his blood-stained* war-horse seated,
King Messiah rideth on;
Till, his foes and our's defeated,
All the Earth becomes his throne.
Yes, in clouds the Conqueror cometh
To assert his rightful reign:
Sin to deathless woe He doometh,
Hell's dark legions rage in vain.

2.

Now be wise in time, ye Princes;
Sinners, quickly kiss the Son;
While his love He still evinces,
While He claims you for his own.
And ye saints, rejoice for ever,
Your Redeemer draweth nigh,
You from bondage to deliver
Into glorious liberty.

* Comp. Rev. vi. 2. Isa. lxiii. 2, 3. Zech. i. 8.

Digitized by Google

3.

O, the wondrous loving-kindness
Christ hath to his people shewn,
Saving them from deepest blindness,
Making all his mercies known.
Lord; as thine vouchsafe to seal us,
'Mongst thy jewels may we shine;
In thy service make us zealous,
Living, dying, keep us thine!

II.—THE TIME OF NEED.

Heb. iv. 16.

"Grace to help in time of need;"
Much in those few words we read:
Stay, my soul, enquire and see,
When the time of need may be.

When thine eye's most dear desire
Shall its latest breath expire;
And thou stand'st the dead beside,
Stunn'd, bewildered, stupified.

Or, when those intensely loved
Have to thee unfaithful proved,
And thou art depressed to find
Love inconstant as the wind.

Digitized by Google

Or, when borne along the stream
Of success, its sparkling gleam
Wiles thy heart from *Him* away,
Found so kind in sorrow's day.

Or when disappointment comes,
O'er the mind to spread its glooms,
Or, oppressed with sin, we be
Sinking in despondency.

Or when by some burning word,
Or the Fiend's devices stirr'd
Passion wakes an inward hell
Which we vainly strive to quell.

Or should persecution's voice
Offer thee the awful choice,
(All his tortures in thine eye,)
To renounce thy faith, or die.

Or, more dire than martyrdom,
That tremendous day shall come,
When revealed in flaming fire
Circled by his myriad quire,

The Eternal shall descend,
And the world shall meet its end,
While the judgment shall proceed:—
Ah! those will be times of need.

Digitized by Google

Worldling, from thy dreams awake!
Timely, admonition take;
Health and vigour now may cheer,
But a time of need draws near.

Fountain of the gift divine!
Shower thy grace on me and mine;
For, till from life's perils freed,
Every time's a time of need.

III.—CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

"They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."—Ps. ix. 10.

1.

I WILL trust in GOD for ever,
Though the world convulsed shall be;
No created power shall sever
Me from Him who died for me.
From eternity He chose me,
All my vileness in his sight;
He will not now leave and lose me,
Brought from darkness to his light.

2.

What, if toils, temptations, sorrows,
Be the waves through which I steer?
Faith from these a comfort borrows—
Me to Him they more endear.

Digitized by Google

Yes—He feels for our distresses,
  High exalted as He is:
Not a grief our hearts depresses,
  But it deeply touches his.

3.

Mercy, hitherto, and goodness
  Through this world have mark'd my way;
And amid the tempest's rudeness,
  Arms unseen have prov'd my stay.
And are those arms now grown wearied,
  Or will Christ no more befriend?
Blessed be his love unvaried,
  He will save me to the end.

4.

All supplies He hath provided
  For my devious journey here,
And, by his safe conduct guided,
  I in Zion shall appear.
Let me, then, no longer grieving
  His good Spirit by my fears,
Trust my kind Protector, leaving
  In his bosom all my cares.

Digitized by Google

IV.—REST.

Heb. iv. 9.

I ASK'D the swift heavens, that wheel'd o'er my head,
I ask'd the deep sea, as he roll'd in his bed;
I question'd all nature, with travail oppress'd,
For what they all panted—they answer'd me—Rest.

Then I turn'd me to Man—and of him I enquired
What dearest of blessings his heart most desired;
From the throne's sceptred owner, of empires possess'd,
To the hovel's poor inmate, he too replied—Rest.

Yes, for rest all are sighing, and rest there remains:
Creation shall yet be releas'd from her pains;
For "the Just One" hath carried our sins and our woes,
That we on his breast may for ever repose.

Then, Pilgrim of Zion, look up through thy tears;
How bright through their flow yonder high world appears!
O! press for its raptures; though toilsome the road,
"There remaineth a rest to the people of GOD."

James Dennett, Printer, 121, Fleet Street.

Digitized by Google

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1.

THE CHRISTIAN CHAPLET. (Devotional Poems originally published under the title of the Reverie, &c.) Second Edition, price 3s.

Hamilton, Adams, and Co. London, and D. Marples, Liverpool.

2.

PRESENT STATE AND PROSPECTS OF THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH. Price 5s. in cloth.

Seeley and Burnside.

"Few readers, we conceive, will rise from the perusal of the present volume without feeling that its Author has advanced much that is at once interesting and important, and that his work is deserving of careful perusal and extensive circulation."—CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN.

3.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY TO HIS SOVEREIGN: A Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Bangor, Diocese of Down, on the occasion of Her Majesty's Coronation; and published by request. Price 6d.

G. Phillips, and G. Druett, Belfast.

Digitized by Google

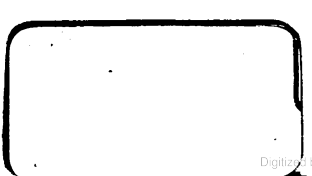
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google